

# **Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Civic Plaza**

Concept Design Presentation  
September 29, 2020

This project will be a transformational one for Downtown Sault Ste. Marie. A plaza that will be a four-season destination full of exciting activities. Brook McIlroy’s task as the designers for this new plaza is to work closely with the community, Council and City staff to advance concepts that reflect the fresh and exciting energy building in Downtown.



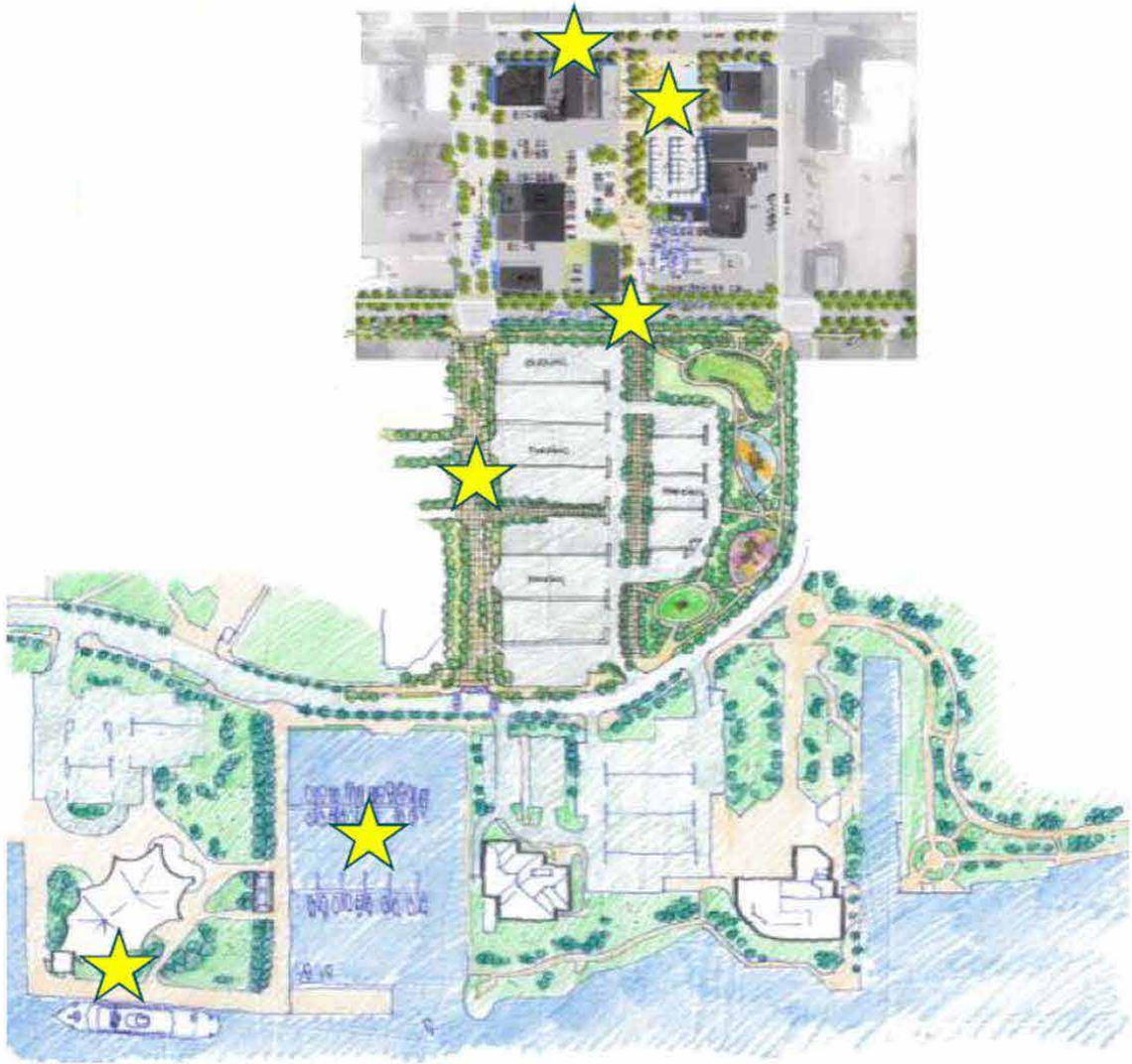
A visionary design for the Civic Plaza in Downtown Sault Ste. Marie will...

- 1 Elevate the Plaza as the signature public space for downtown
- 2 Create a four-season destination full of exciting activities that encourage repeat visits
- 3 Undertake a holistic placemaking approach – considering design, use, activities and programming – that will ensure success for this important public place
- 4 Advance concepts that reflect the fresh and exciting energy building in downtown Sault Ste. Marie
- 5 Incentivize new development in downtown by drawing visitors to the area for over 250 days of the year



The Plaza design process will build on the growing awareness in the community of the importance of activity-based destinations in the downtown, which began with the City of Sault Ste. Marie's 2016 Downtown Strategy.

## Downtown Plan



Let's begin by looking at  
the site and its context in  
Downtown.

# Context & Site Analysis



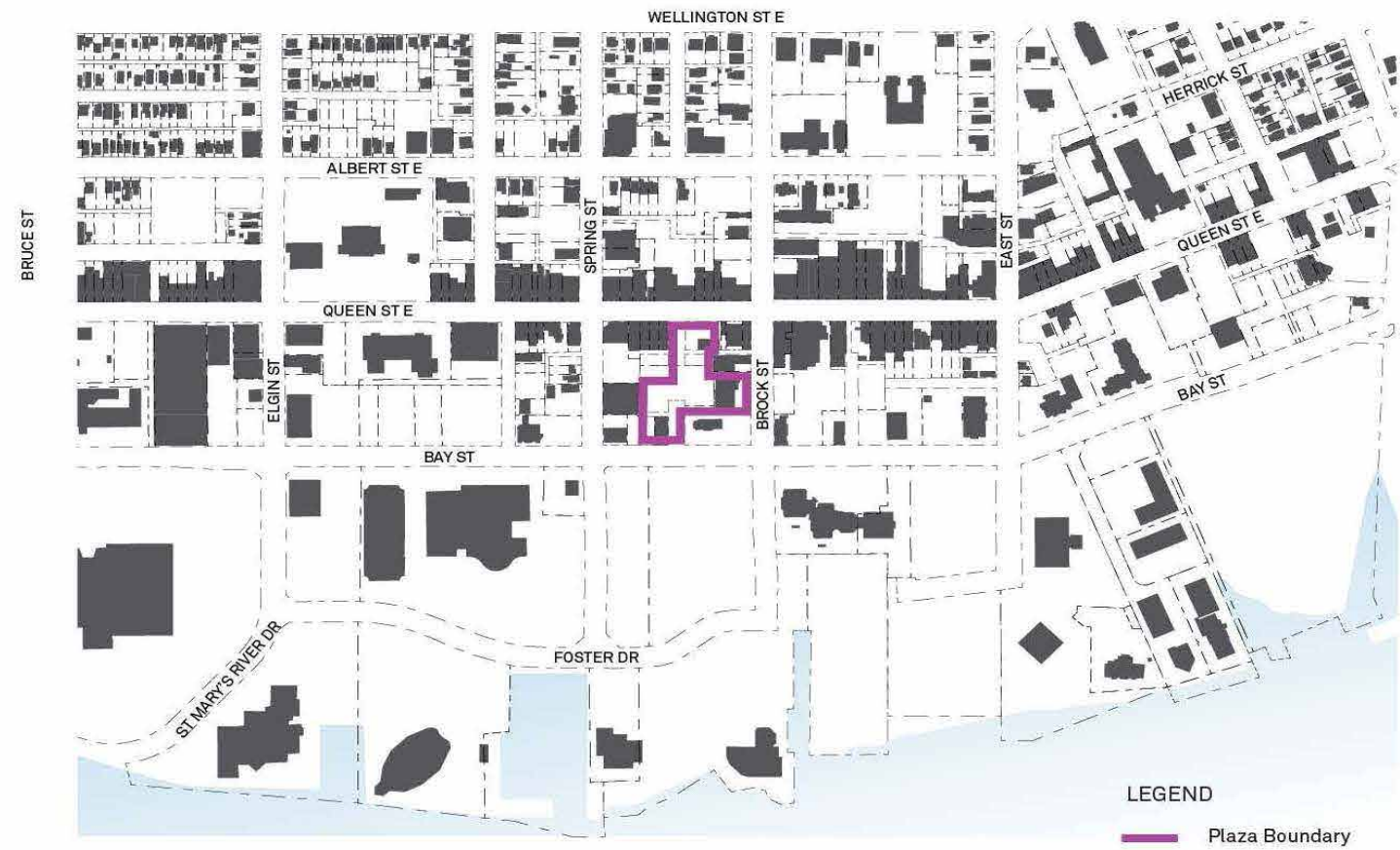
The site is bounded by Queen Street, Bay Street, Brock Street and Spring Street. The site is approximately 0.77 hectares or 1.9 acres in size.

### Site + Additional Property Acquisitions



The site sits in the heart of downtown, due-north of City Hall and close to waterfront amenities.

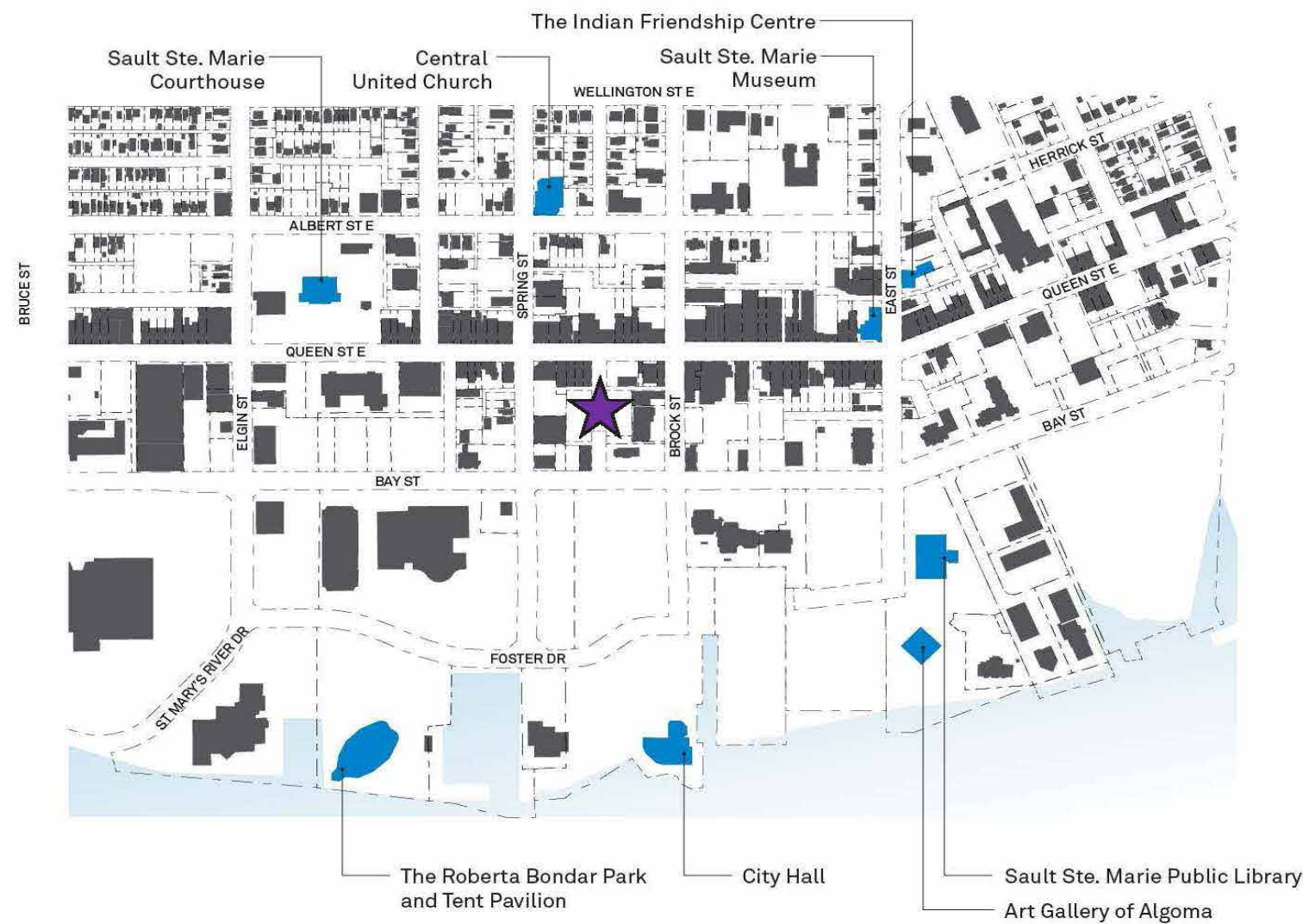
# Context Analysis





It is within easy walking distance to many arts, culture and recreation destinations in downtown.

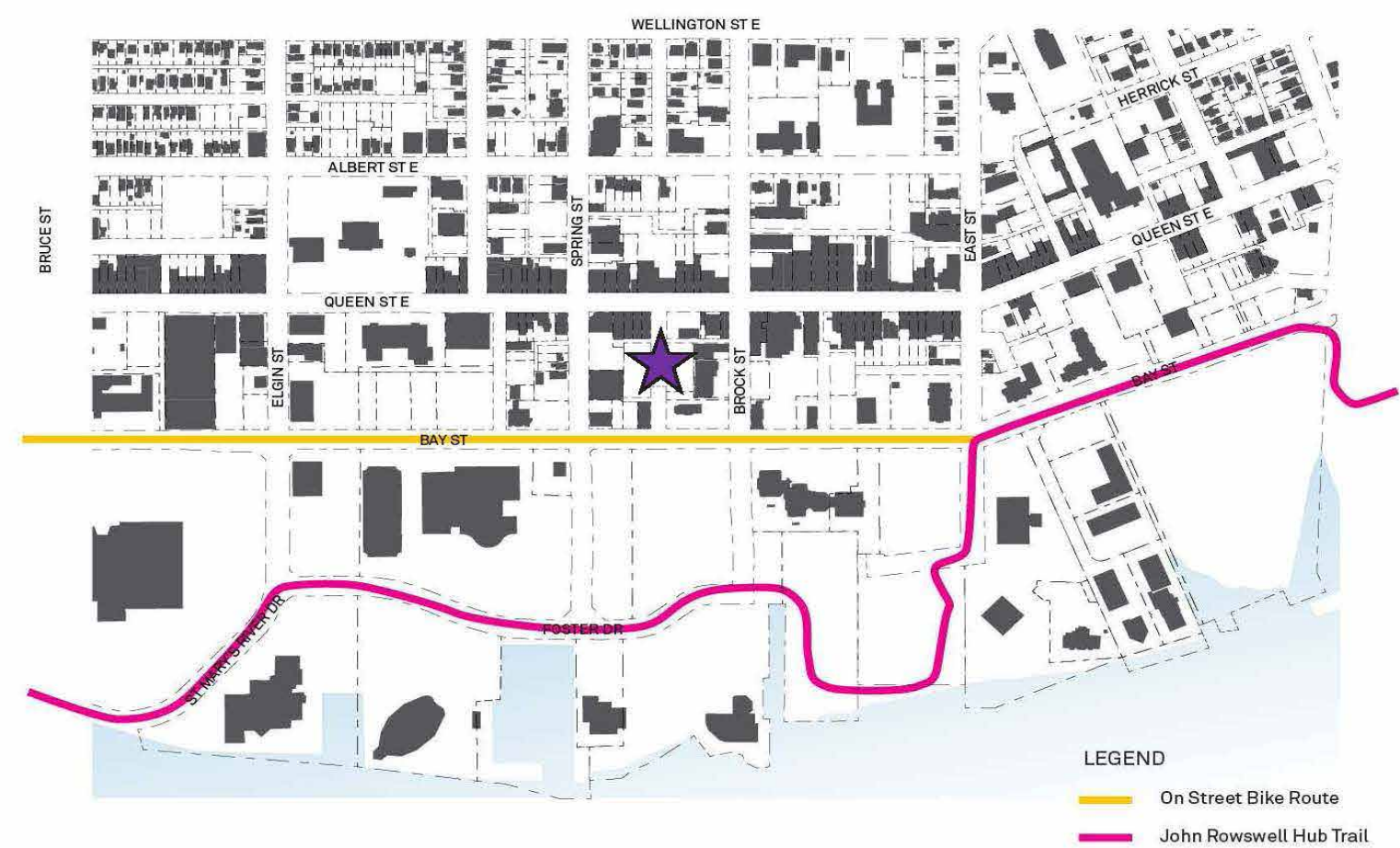
## Context Analysis – Arts, Culture & Recreation





The site is well served by active transportation routes with the new Bay Street bike lane linking directly to the block and the waterfront hub trail close by.

## Context Analysis – Active Transportation



Notably the site is in a block with little green space in the immediate area. This tells us that any new soft landscape areas will be well received here.

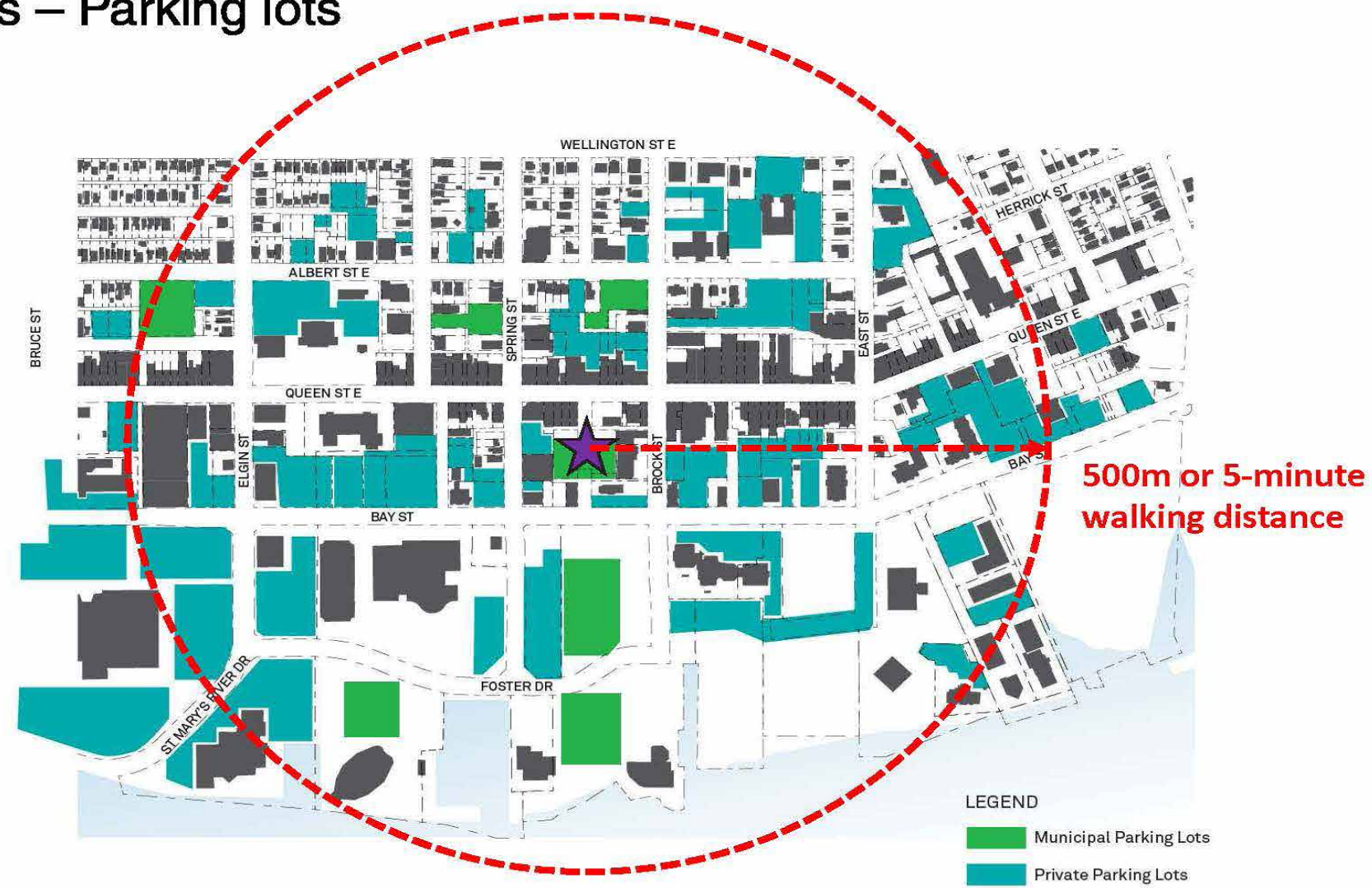
## Context Analysis – Green Space





There is abundant parking close by to the site, with large municipal lots immediately south and north of the plaza. There are hundreds of available public spots within a 5-minute walking radius of the site, indicated by the red circle on this plan.

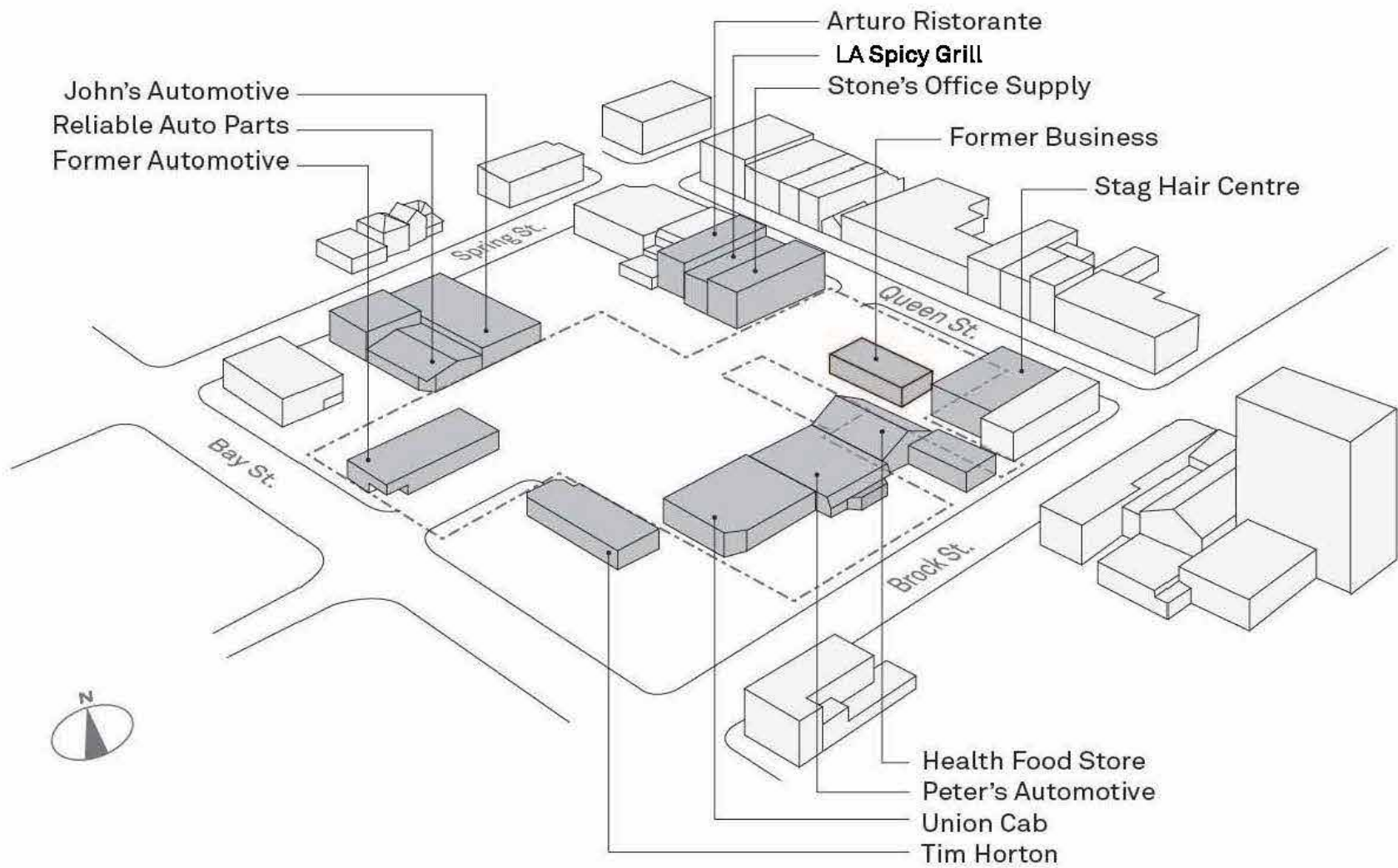
Context Analysis – Parking lots





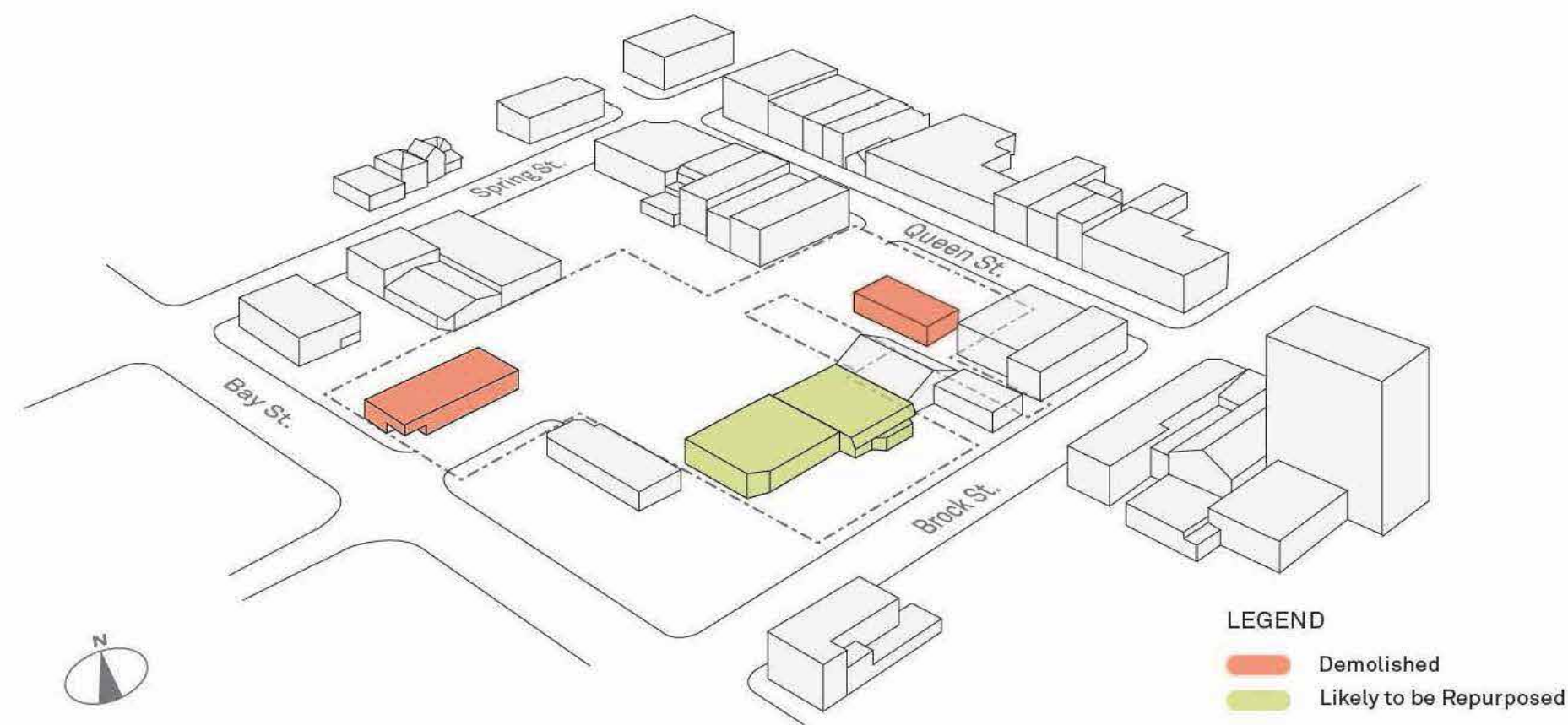
Zooming in to the block, we can see that the site is ringed by a variety of businesses.

## Site Analysis – Adjacent Buildings

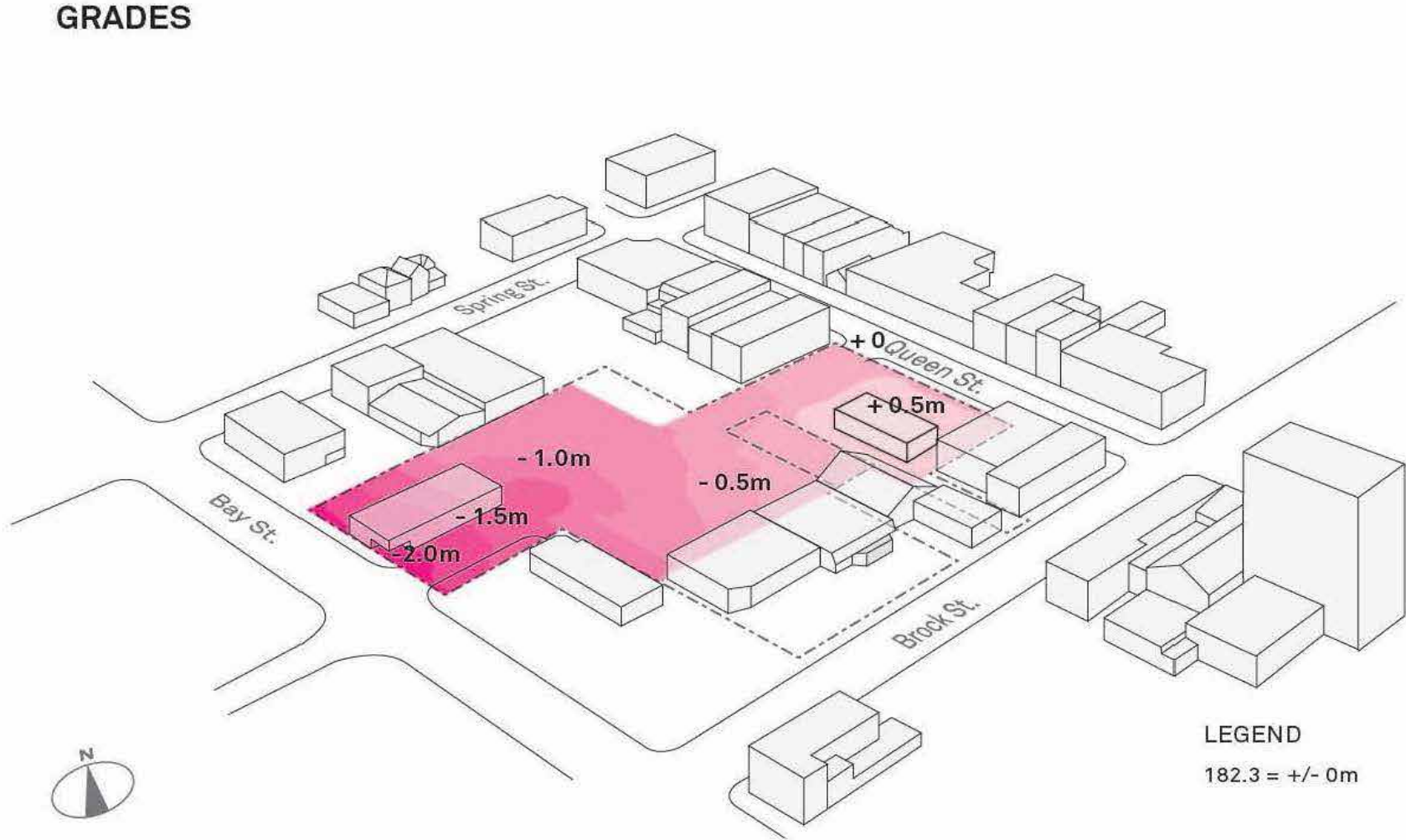


The City has recently purchased additional properties to provide better access to Bay Street and to house the relocated indoor market. The co-location of the plaza and the indoor market is an exciting development as they will support each other.

## Site Analysis – Acquired Properties



Finally, it is important to note that this site is not flat. There is a 2m elevation difference between Queen Street and Bay Street, which presents a challenge as the major elements in the square need to be flat or level. You will see during the concept design portion of this presentation how we have addressed the grade change in a creative and constructive way.





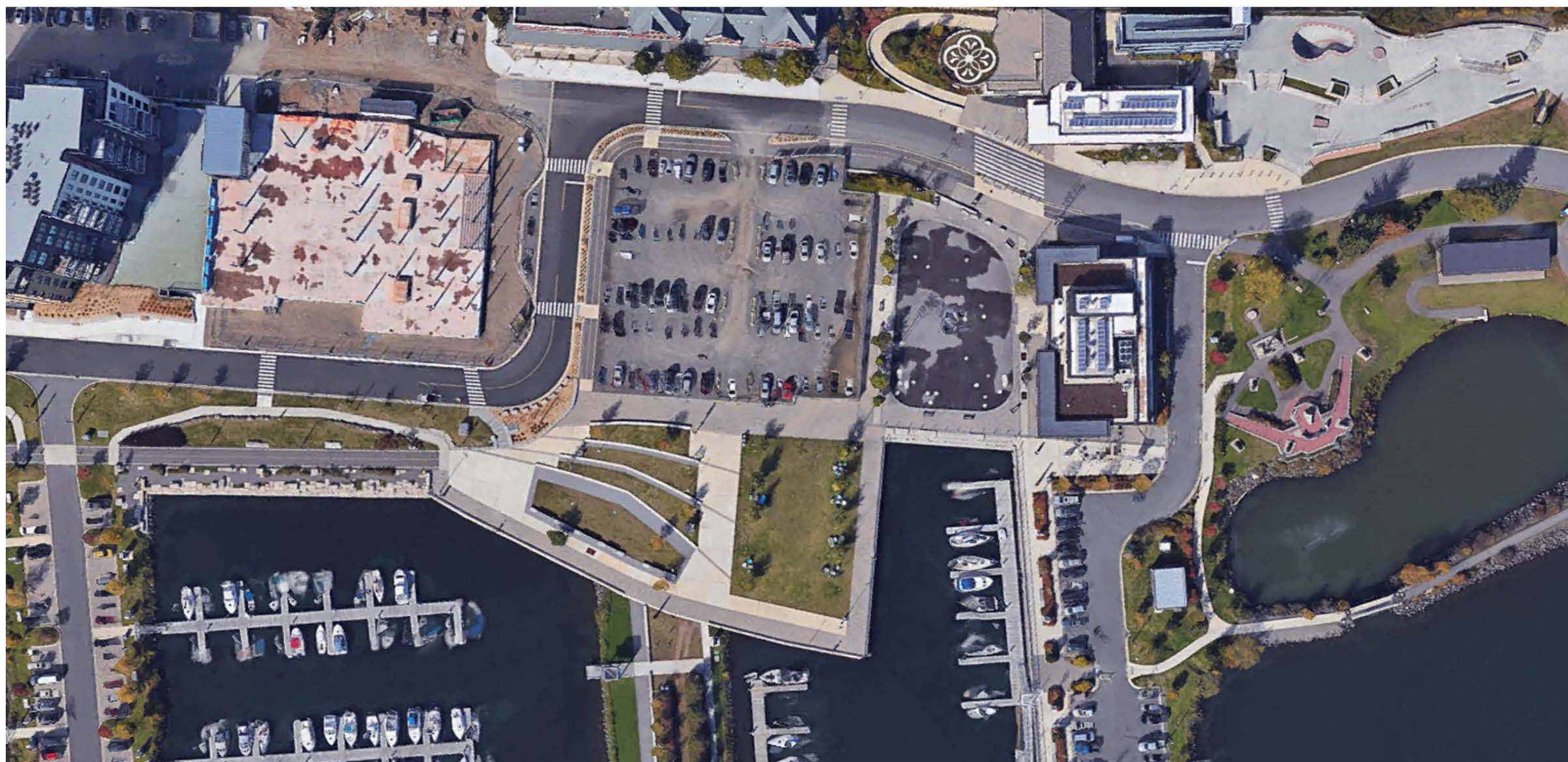
The following Case Studies have been used as benchmarks for sizing elements and placement within the site.

# Case Studies



The first case study is Prince Arthur's Landing in Thunder Bay, a project that Brook McIlroy acted as the lead designer for.

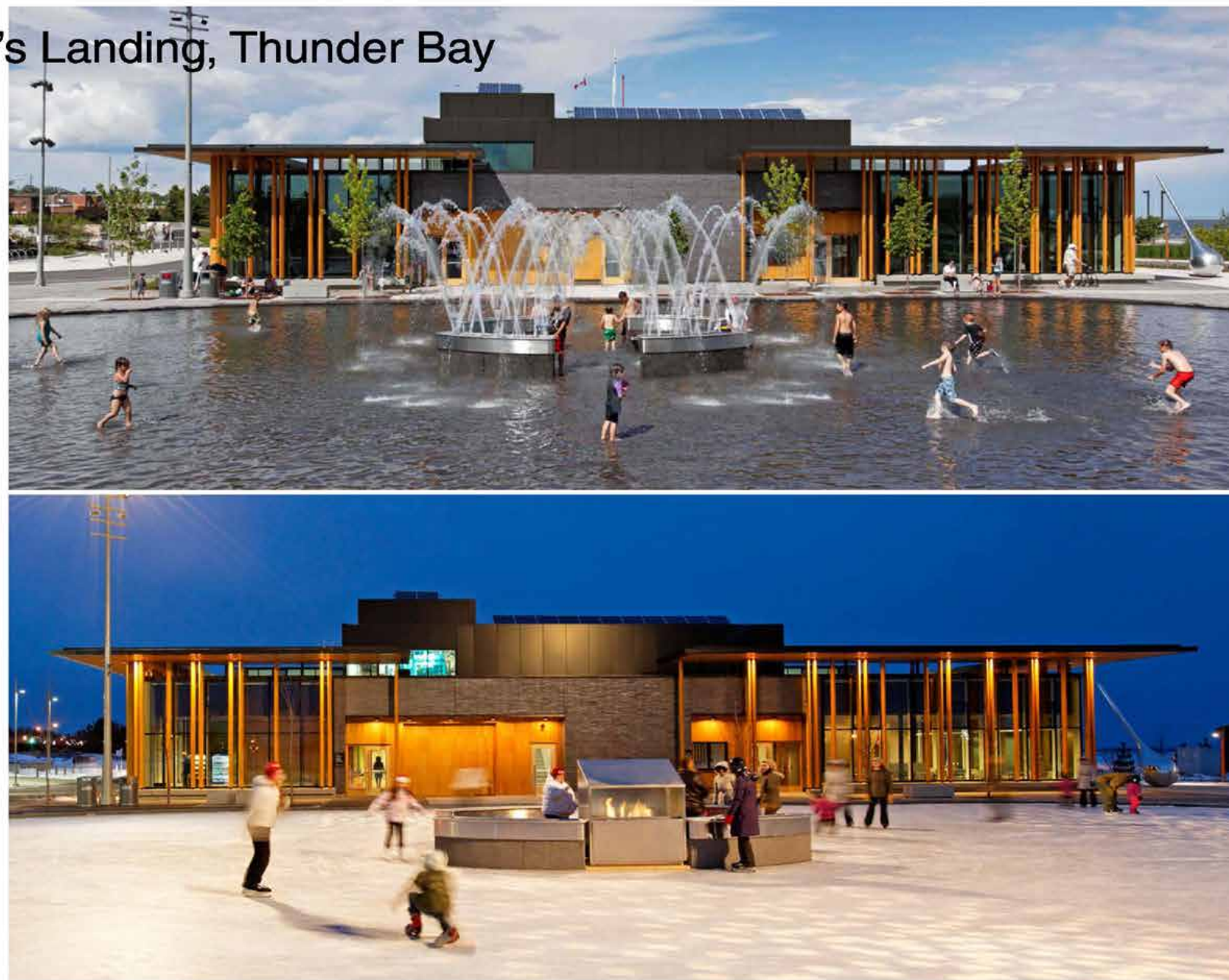
## Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder Bay





It includes a skating rink and splash pad with a thin layer – or scrim – of water.

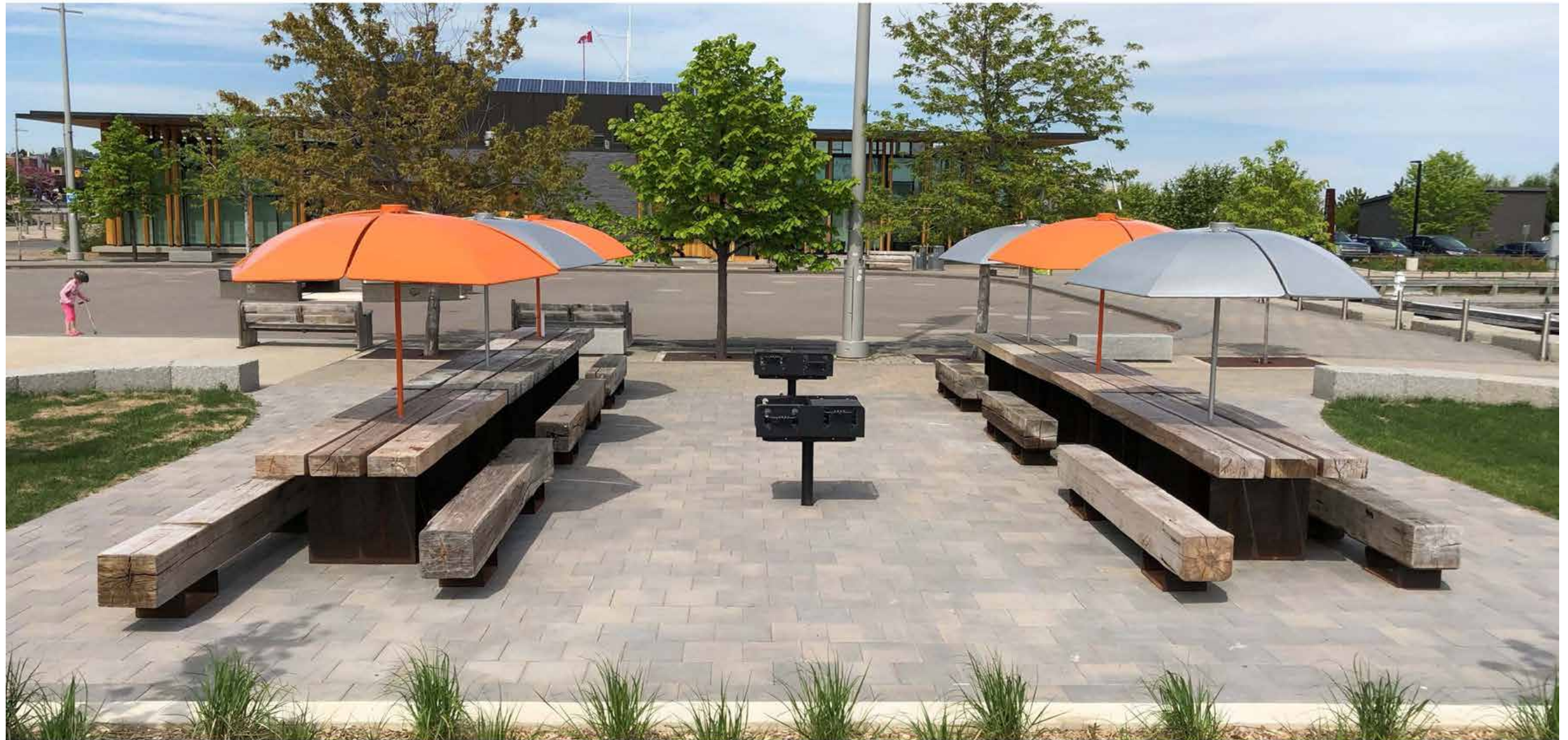
## Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder Bay





And a lots of seating around the area because this area has been very popular.

## Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder Bay



## Prince Arthur's Landing, Thunder Bay

### **Total Size: 0.83 hectares**

- 940 m<sup>2</sup> skating rink
- 750 m<sup>2</sup> pavilion that includes a restaurant and event space, as well as services for skating/splash pad

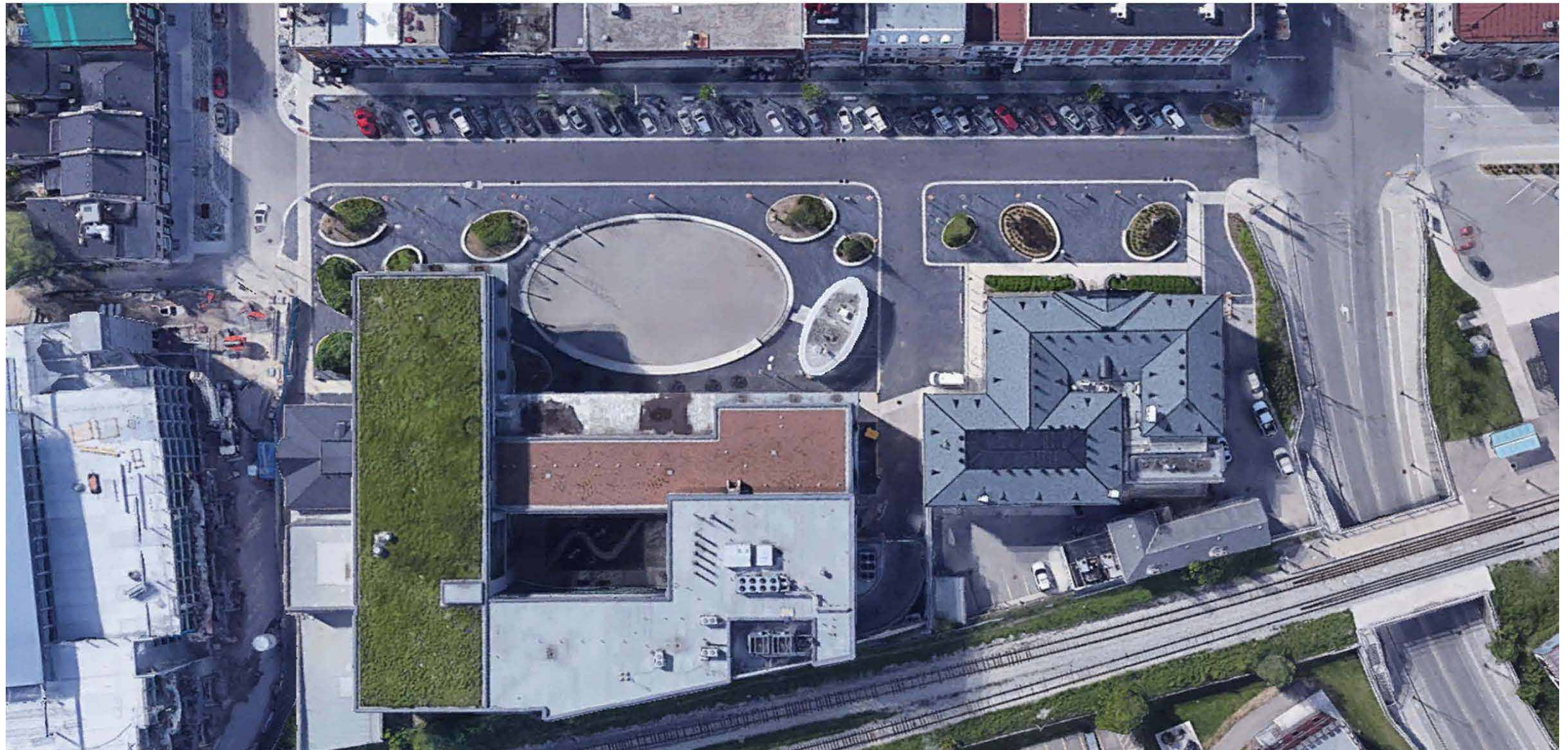
### **Amenities:**

- Skate change room, mechanical and ice resurfacers housed in adjacent building
- Concession and restaurant in adjacent building
- Trees in soil cells
- Fireplace in winter, spray play in summer
- Dynamic lighting
- Newly built expansion of park area surrounding areas \*\*
- Flexible outdoor market space



The second case study is Market Square in Guelph, located outside the new City Hall.

## Market Square, Guelph





It also includes a splashpad  
with a scrim of water.

## Market Square, Guelph





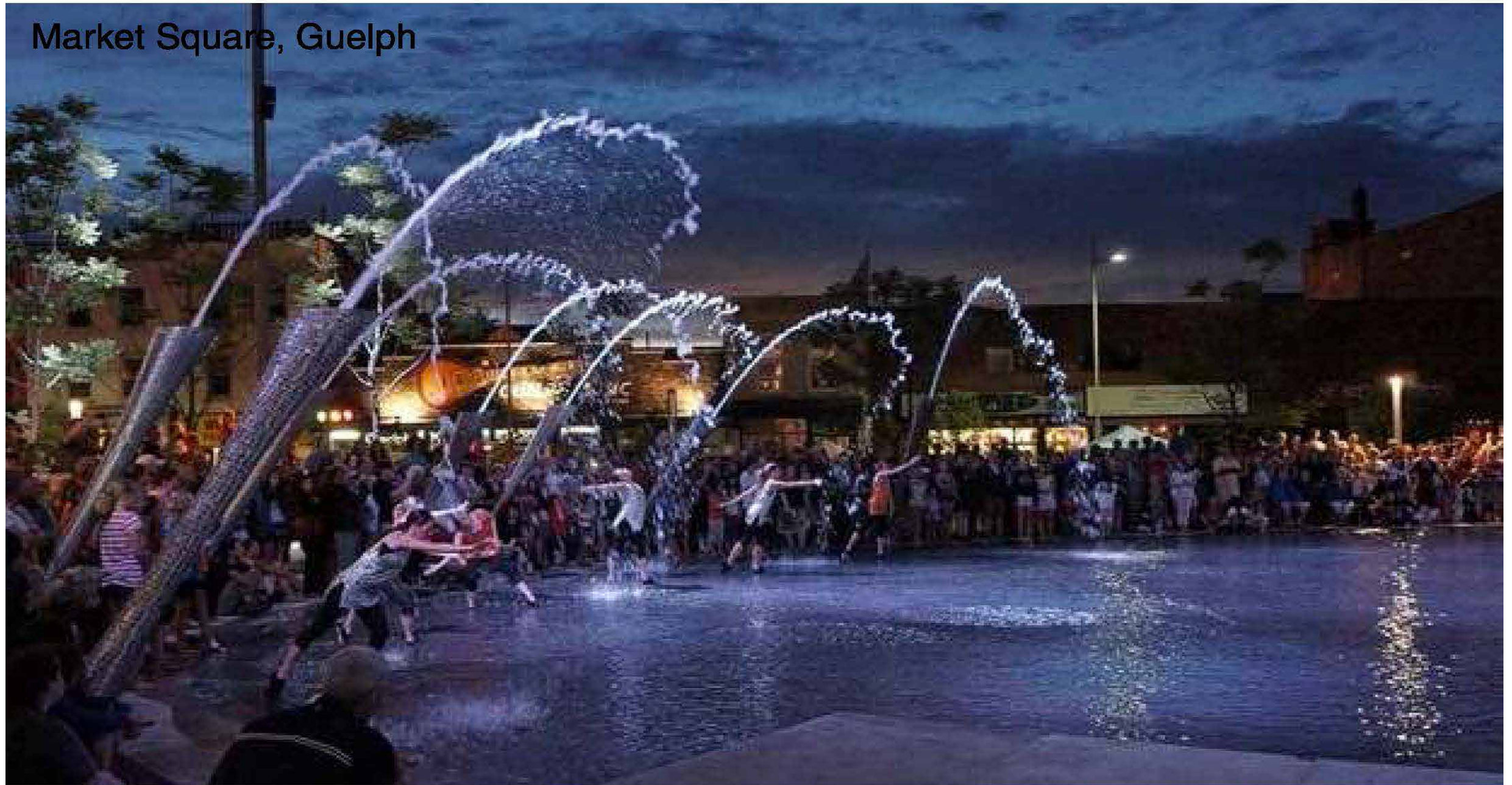
That transforms into a skating rink with coloured lighting displays.

# Market Square, Guelph





The plaza now hosts  
community theater events in  
the splashpad!





## Market Square, Guelph

### **Total Size: 0.77 hectares**

- 790 m<sup>2</sup> oval skating rink
- 460 m<sup>2</sup> pavilion (lockers, seating, washrooms and storage for ice resurfacing machine)
- 30 parking spaces

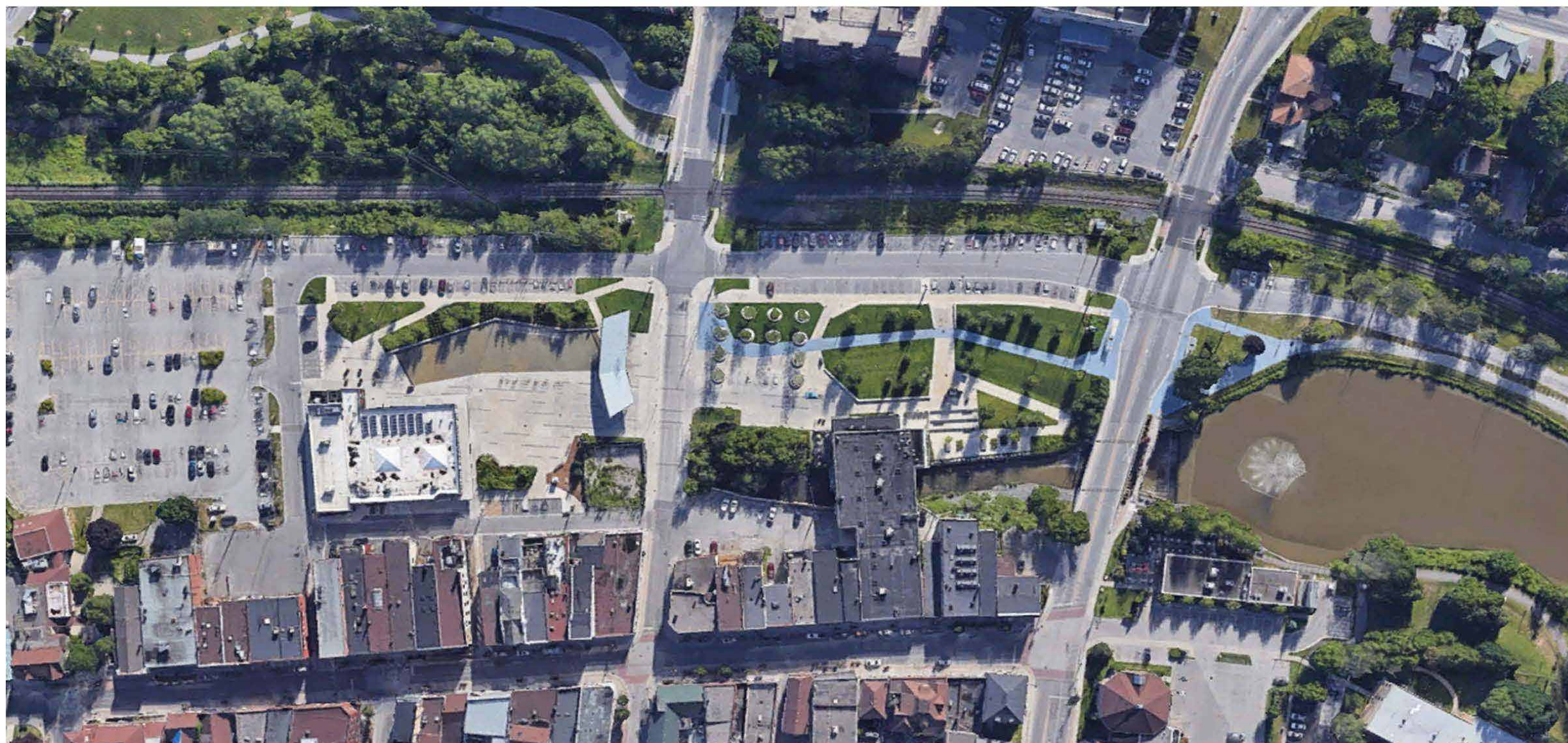
### **Square Amenities:**

- upgrades to water, sewer and utilities along adjacent street
- renewed sidewalks and landscaping
- skating rink/wading pool with lighting and water features
- skating pavilion with washrooms and ice resurfacing machine
- market building located 1 block south



The next case study is Riverwalk Commons in Newmarket.

## Riverwalk Commons, Newmarket





Which again includes a skating rink and splashpad with a scrim of water.

## Riverwalk Commons, Newmarket





And a community stage and flexible gathering area.

# Riverwalk Commons, Newmarket



## Riverwalk Commons, Newmarket

### **Total Size: 1.27 hectares**

- 870 m<sup>2</sup> oval skating rink
- 1,820m<sup>2</sup> community centre (4 large community rooms, mechanical room, garage, washrooms)
- 280 m<sup>2</sup> shade structure

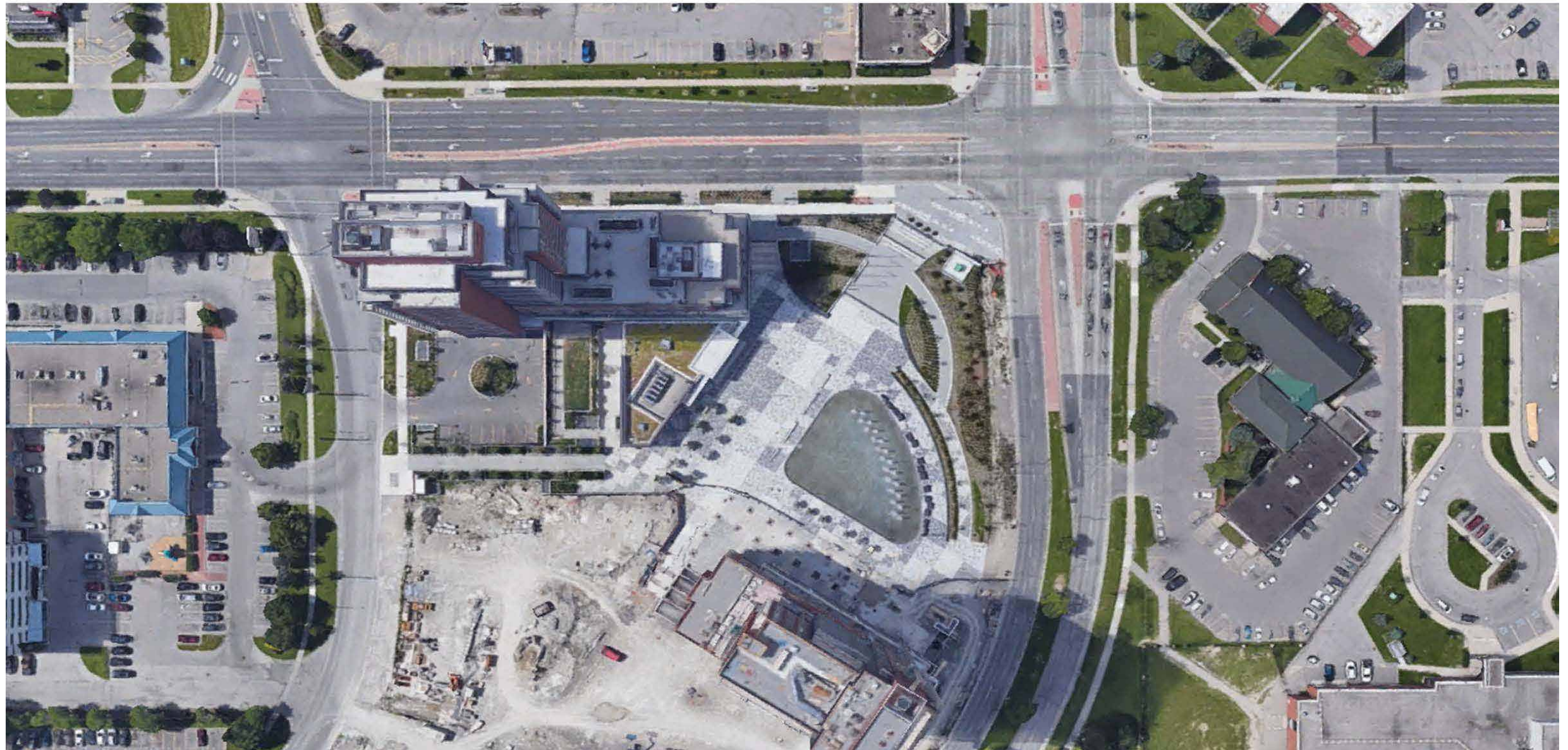
### **Plaza Amenities:**

- Upgraded former parking lot into multi-use adaptable plaza space
- Connects existing trail system
- New community centre
- Open plaza
- Skating rink/wading pool with lighting and water features
- Trees with soil cells
- Large shade structure
- Local outdoor market (first Saturday from May-October) with approx. 40 vendors



Finally we'll look at Pat Bayly Square in Ajax.

## Pat Bayly Square, Ajax





Which has a skating rink and waterfeature along with a flexible gathering area.

## Pat Bayly Square, Ajax





## Pat Bayly Square, Ajax

### **Total Size: 0.77 hectares**

- 860 m<sup>2</sup> skating/splash pad

### **Amenities:**

- Outdoor event space, stage, seating and public art
- Adjacent civic buildings with washrooms and services for skating/splash pad

A size comparison with each of these case studies confirms that this site is about the right size.

## Plaza Size Comparison



Downtown Civic Plaza  
Sault Ste. Marie



Market Square  
Guelph



Prince Arthur's Landing  
Thunder Bay



Riverwalk Commons  
Newmarket



Pat Bayly Square  
Ajax



Looking specifically at the skating rink / splashpad,

# Skate Size Comparison



Downtown Civic Plaza  
Sault Ste. Marie



Market Square  
Guelph



Prince Arthur's Landing  
Thunder Bay



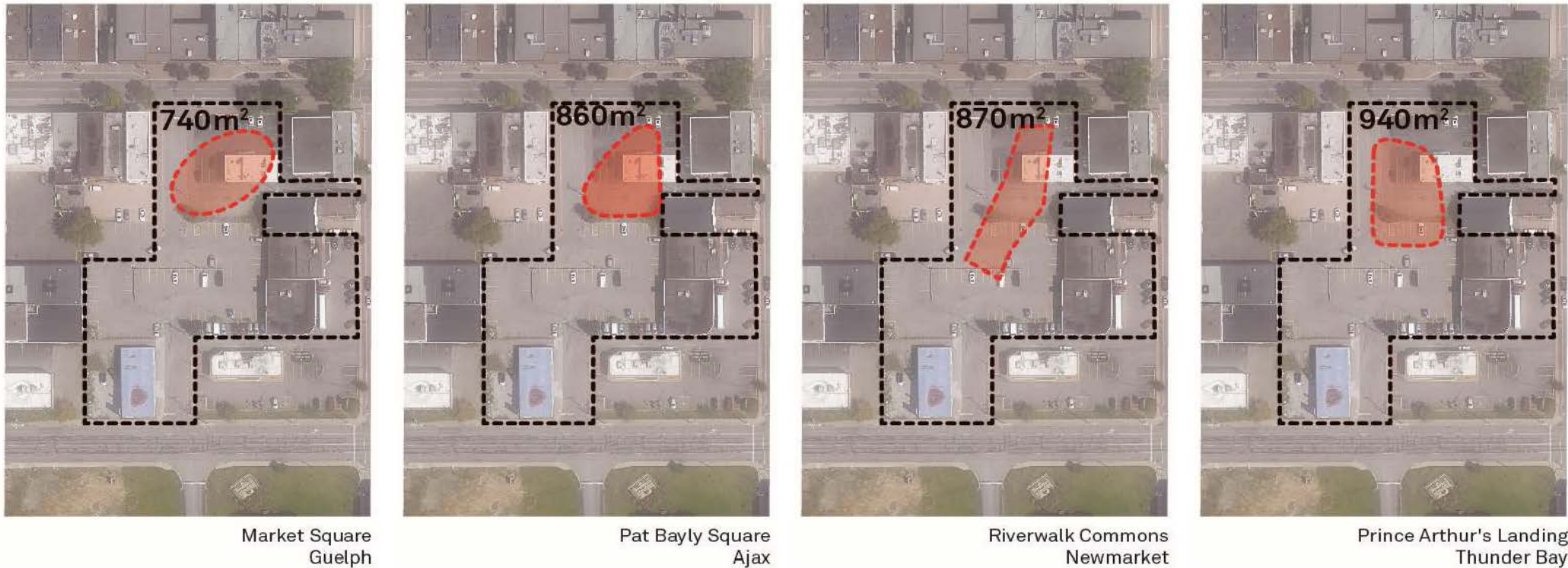
Riverwalk Commons  
Newmarket



Pat Bayly Square  
Ajax

We can see that all of our case study rinks fit comfortably on our site.

## Skate Size Comparison





Before our firm was involved, City Staff conducted community engagement to develop ideas for what people wanted for the site.

From this list, the skating rink/splashpad and flexible event space emerged as the key elements for the square.

This data also gave us a good idea of what events might occur in the plaza.

## Initial Ideas for Programming & Events in the Plaza

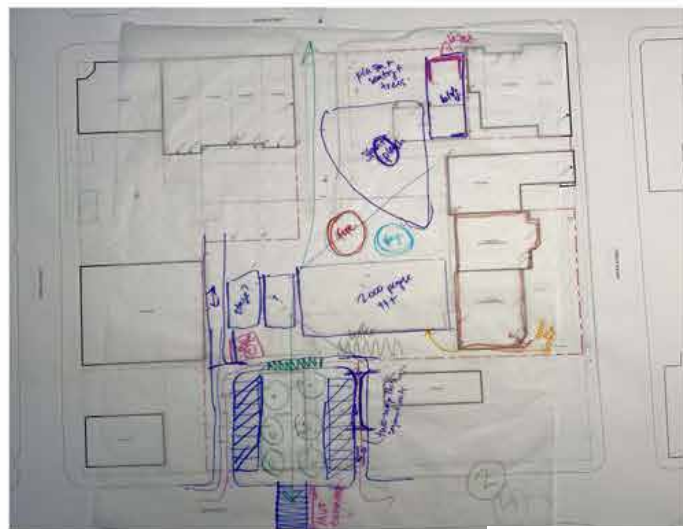
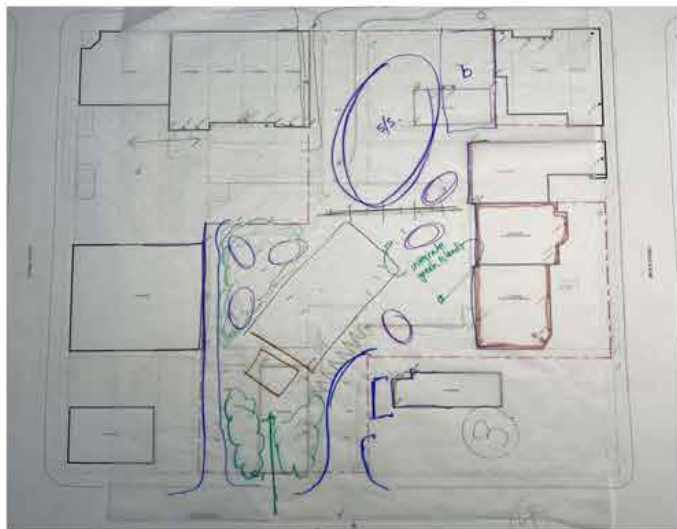
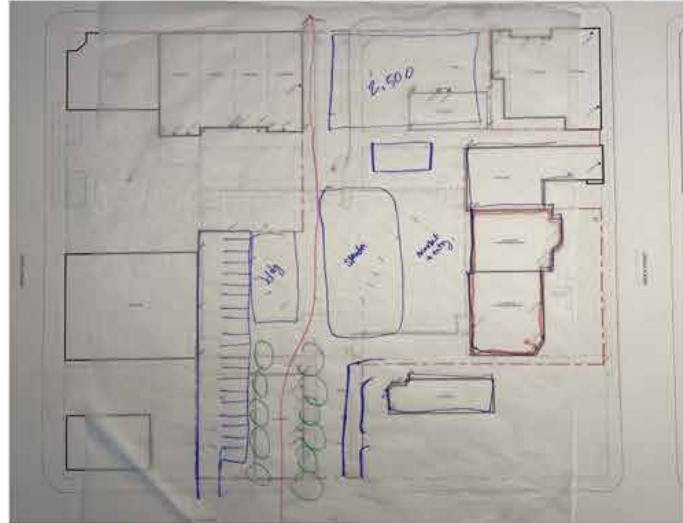
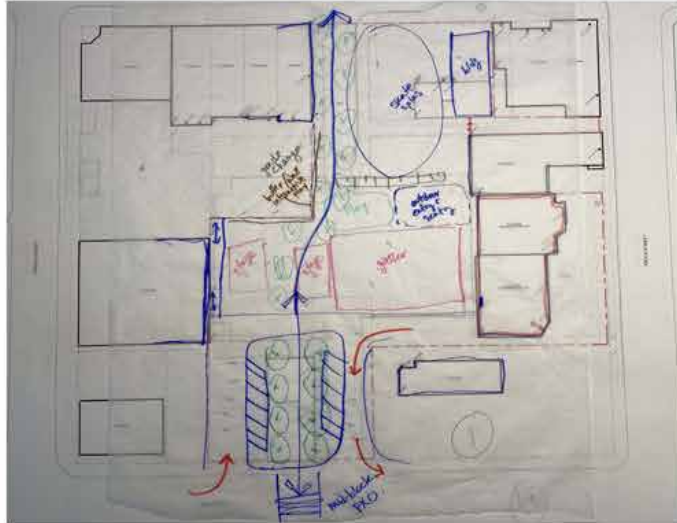
- **Art in the Park**
- **Car shows such as the annual Queen Street Cruise**
- **Bonfires**
- **Buskers, Taste of the Sault Festival, Jazz Fest, Fringe Festival**
- **Children’s play space (includes games, outdoor chess, shuffleboard, etc.)**
- **Christmas tree**
- **Croki curl and Jam Can curling**
- **Cultural & social gathering space**
- **Dance Groups**
- **Farmer’s market and outdoor market events**
- **Food trucks**
- **Interactive public art features (also temporary displays)**
- **Outdoor Concerts, theatre, movies, musical performances**
- **Pop-up patios**
- **Indigenous ceremony**
- **Skating rink**
- **Spectacular lighting displays**
- **Water feature**
- **Yoga in the plaza**

Early work on the conceptual design included a staff workshop to refine the program and figure out where each element should be located on the site.

It became clear during the workshop that there was an ideal arrangement for the plaza - the skating rink / splashpad should be next to Queen Street and the gathering area should be next to the future market building.

The result – after many months of design and revision – is the plan you see here tonight.

## Design Process – Collaborative Workshop





Let's now look at the design ideas for the plaza.

# Concept Plan



Our concept draws inspiration from the St. Mary's River Rapids, a significant geological feature that is intertwined with this City's history.

Formed during the last ice age as melting ice-waters breached a land dam near Gros Cap, the rapids became a focal point for the region's first inhabitants who called it Baa-wit-i-gong, or "place of the rapids". The area has been a gathering and harvesting place for people for centuries.



## Design Inspiration



Post-colonization, Sault Ste. Marie became an industrial centre, owing to the St. Mary's River, hydro power and regional resources.

Today, the rapids remain an important experience in the City - with ships passing, fish and water-levels ebbing and flowing.

Our concept celebrates the dynamic St. Mary's River Rapids, using their form as inspiration for the plaza design, with shapes, patterns and storytelling within the space.

# Design Inspiration

Our concept draws inspiration from the St. Mary's River rapids.

Geologically, the St. Mary's River narrows marks a significant elevation change from Lake Superior to Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, creating a dynamic set of rapids that was once rich in flora and fauna.

To the region's first inhabitants – the Annishinaabe – the area was called Baawitigong, or “place of the rapids” and was a gathering place for the local community.

Post-colonization, Sault Ste. Marie became an important trading hub and industrial centre, owing to the St. Mary's River and to the conquering of the rapids through technological innovation.

Today, the rapids remain an important part of the experience of the St. Mary's River as ships pass, fish and water levels ebb and flow. The backdrop of the rapids that surround Sault Ste. Marie is the natural beauty of northern Ontarian landscape.

Our concept celebrates the dynamic St. Mary's River rapids, using their form as inspiration for the plaza design, with shapes, patterns and storytelling within the space. Importantly, the story of Baawitigong and the Anishinaabe people will be expressed to ensure today's inhabitants of this land understand that Indigenous peoples cared for and understood this place long ago



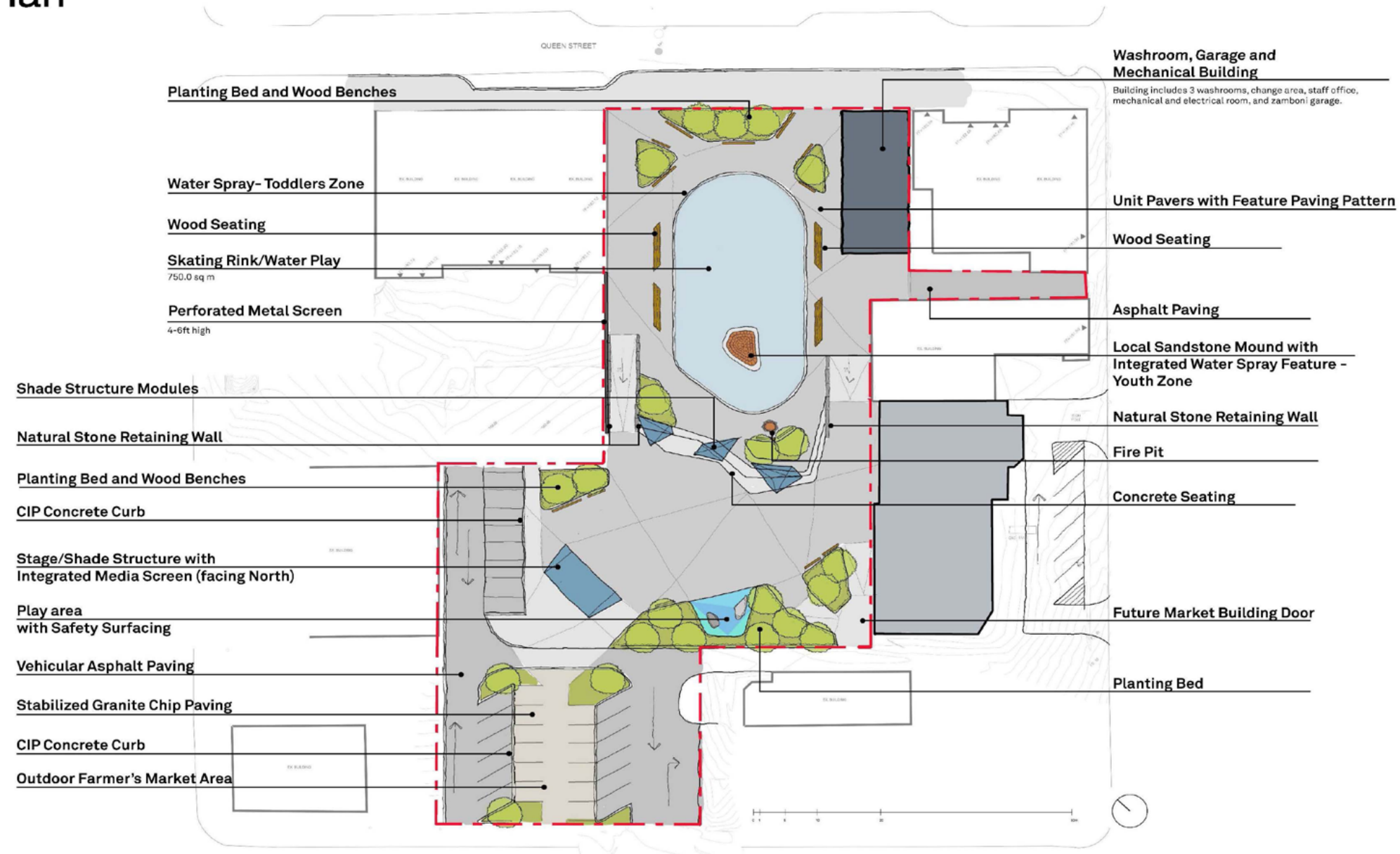


The plaza concept can be divided into two main rooms. The upper room, fronting Queen Street, hosts the main activity generator – the skating rink / splashpad. The rink is set back from Queen Street and ringed with seating because this will become a very popular place.

The associated support building will house public washrooms, a skate change room, mechanical equipment and a Zamboni garage.

To the west of the rink is the main north-south walkway, which links Queen Street to Bay Street through the site.

# Concept Plan

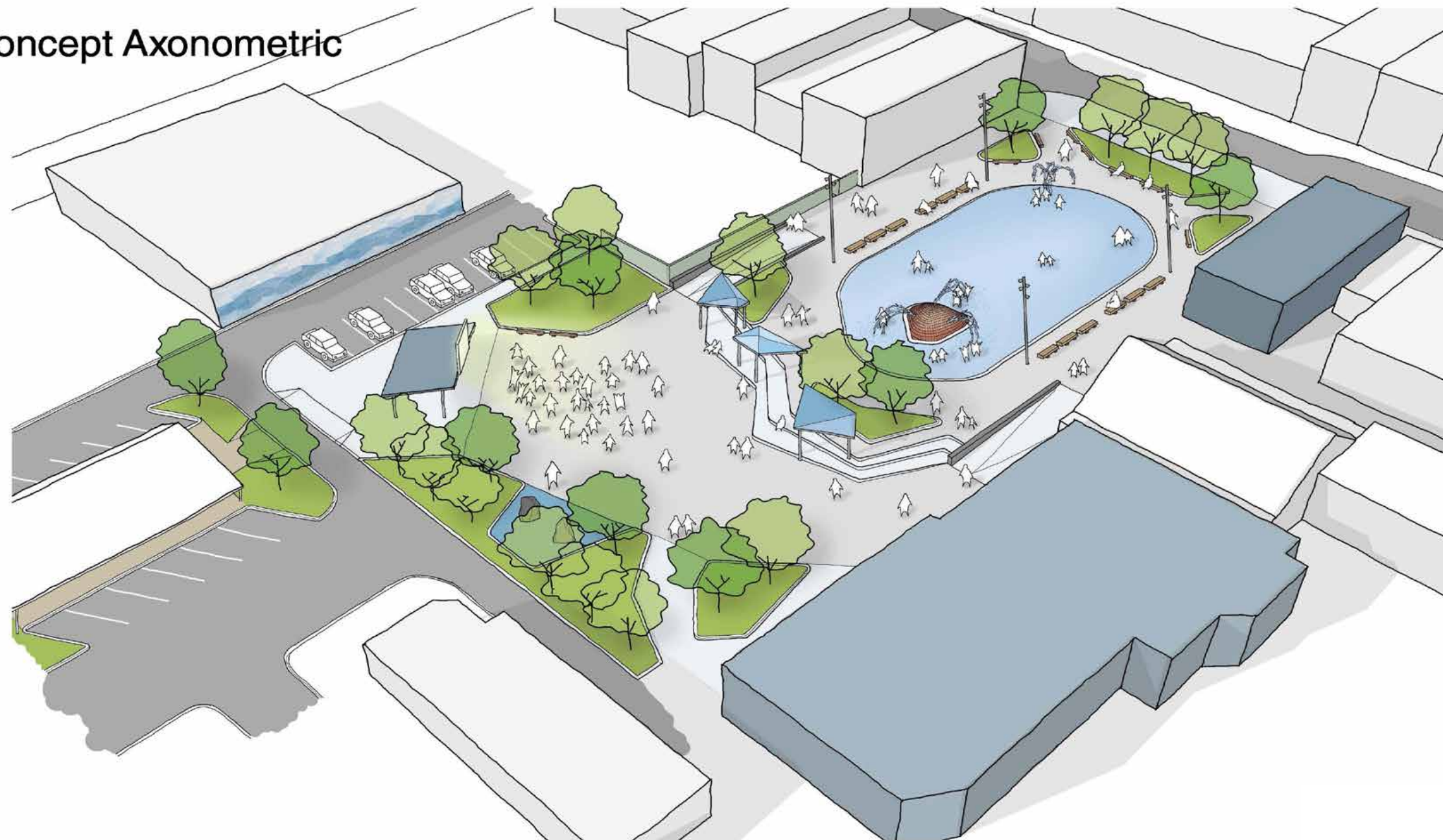




The lower room is the flexible outdoor gathering place, anchored by a stage and LED screen, which will act as a beacon drawing people down into the site from Queen Street. The gathering place is next to the future indoor market building to the east, allowing events spill out into the square.

Between the upper and lower rooms are a series of elements that allow for elevation change but also support the key functions of the space. Accessible ramps bookend a cluster of stepped seats that look onto the stage and provide lots of seating on market days.

## Concept Axonometric



Stitching the site together are a series of layers.

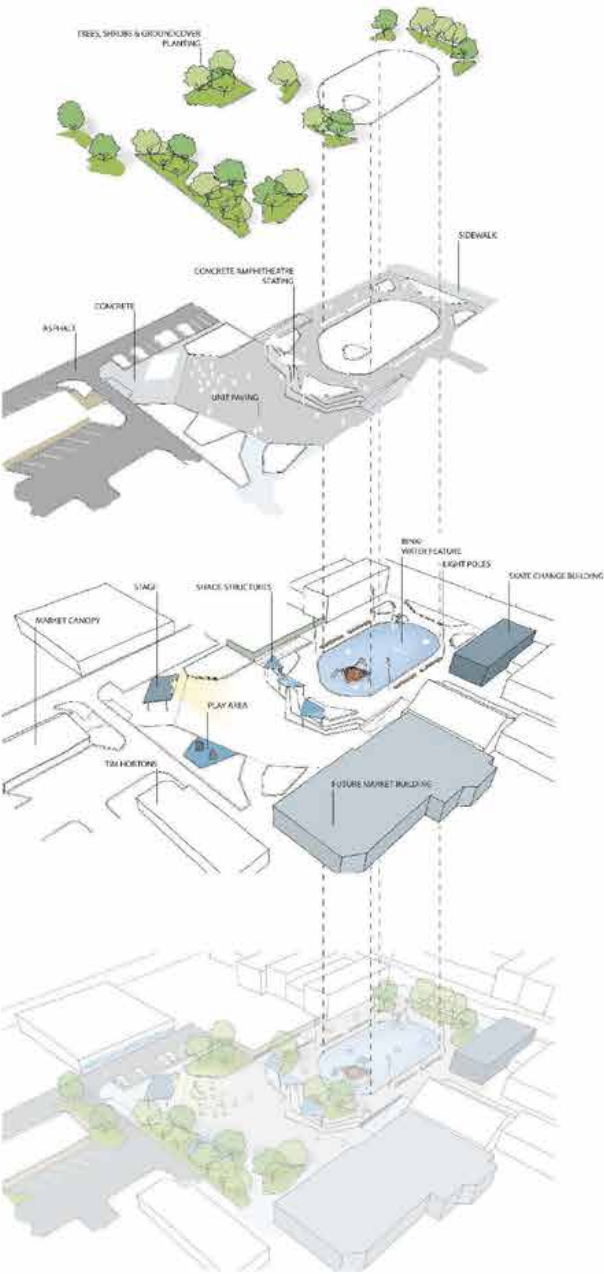
The soft landscape layer will green the site, helping to soften large areas of hard surface paving.

The hard landscape layer includes a signature paving pattern that will express the St. Mary's River Rapids theme.

Activation elements will enliven the plaza throughout the year.

Let's now take a closer look at each major element within the plaza.

# Layering



Soft landscape

Hard landscape

Activation Elements

Plaza



The splash pad will, like the examples shown here, have a scrim of water that kids really, really enjoy playing in. There will be two water jet zones – one quiet area off to the side for toddlers and one larger series of jets for older children.

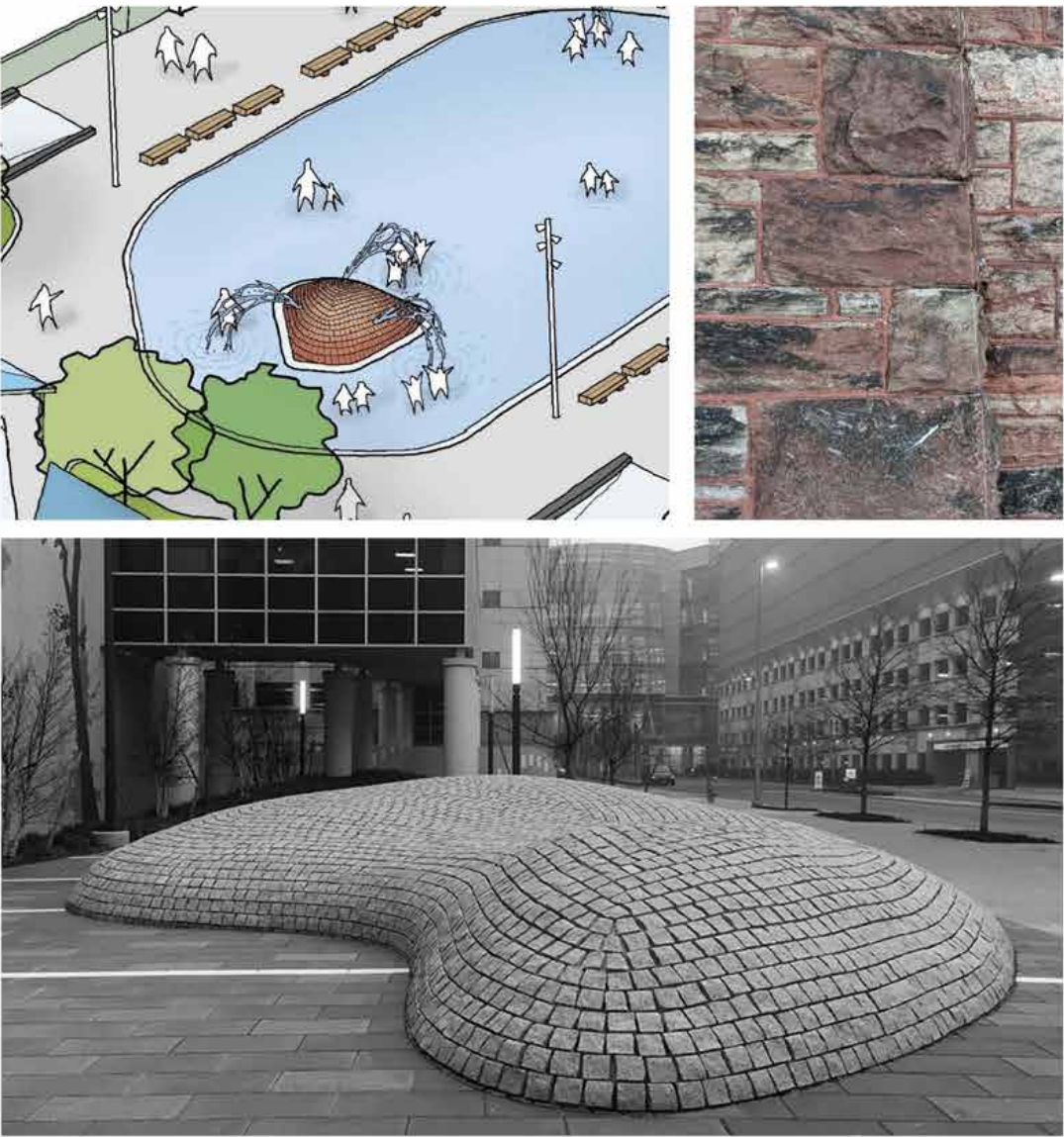
# Splash Pad



Anchoring the splashpad and rink is a signature mound feature, constructed from the local red and cream coloured sandstone that is so characteristic of many buildings in the city.

The mound will be a water-jet feature during the summer and will be an island to skate around in the winter.

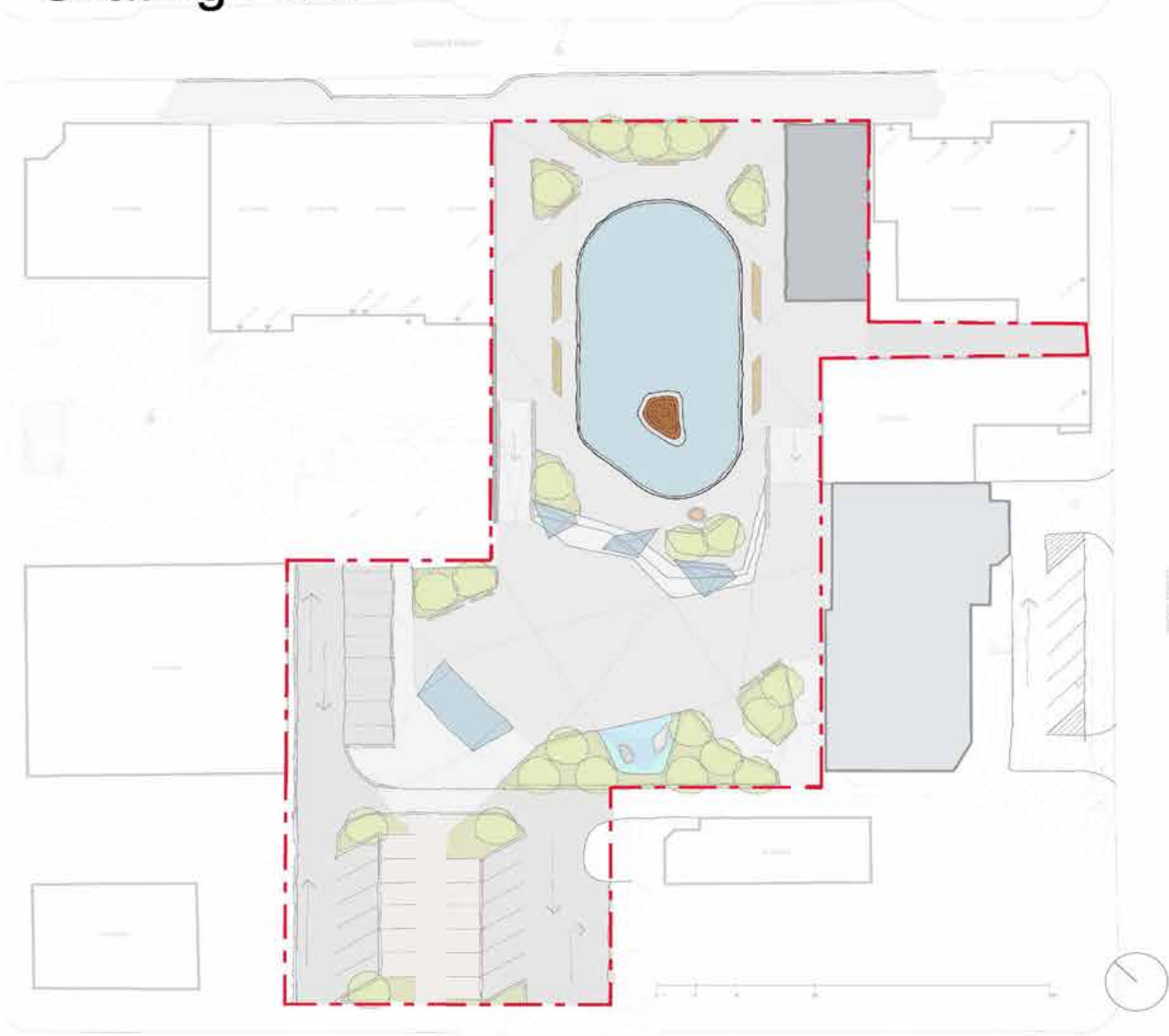
## Splash Pad Mound





During winter months, the splashpad transforms into a skating rink.

# Skating Rink





At 750 square meters, it will be large enough to host a big crowd of skaters. The experience will be enriched by a dynamic lighting strategy that I will explain later in the presentation.

Here we can see a winter evening of skating in the plaza, looking south from Queen Street.





A signature paving pattern will help to unite the plaza's rooms. The pattern will be inspired by the St. Mary's River Rapids.

We will be developing this pattern during the next phase of design.

# Signature Paving Pattern





Large steps between the upper and lower rooms are retaining walls but also functional seating.

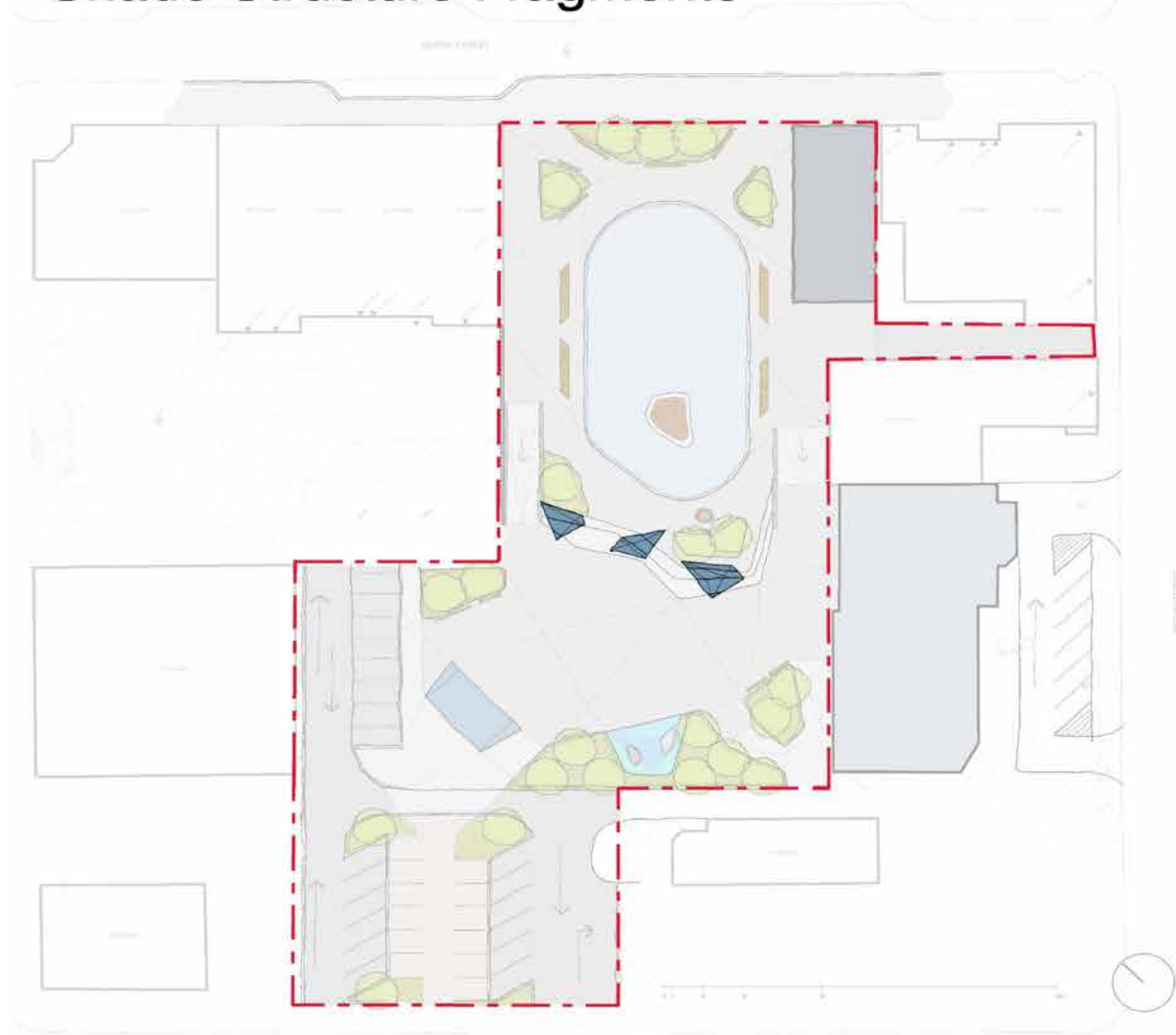
# Amphitheatre Seating





Above those steps, are a series of shade structures that will also reflect the Rapids theme through patterning and lighting. They will provide a nice cool spot for parents to sit while their children splash in the water.

## Shade Structure Fragments





A firepit at the top of the amphitheater steps, and next to the skating rink will become an important gathering area in the plaza. People love a hot fire on a cold day!

## Fire Pit





Anchoring the lower room of the plaza, is a stage with integrated LED screen. This is where folks will gather to watch the next Raptors playoffs run. Or maybe even the Leafs – we can dream!

The stage will host community events and be a shade structure and seating area when not in use otherwise.

## Stage Structure & Event Screen



Here we can see two event scenarios – a concert for 2,500 people and an outdoor market.

## Event Scenarios





There will be a variety of seating around the plaza, supporting all the major elements and events.

# Seating



In the lower room, a play zone with a climbing feature will provide a fun diversion for kids while parents pause outside of the market building.

# Play - Climbing





A series of planting beds across the plaza will soften the space.

They also act as sponges, soaking up stormwater when it rains.

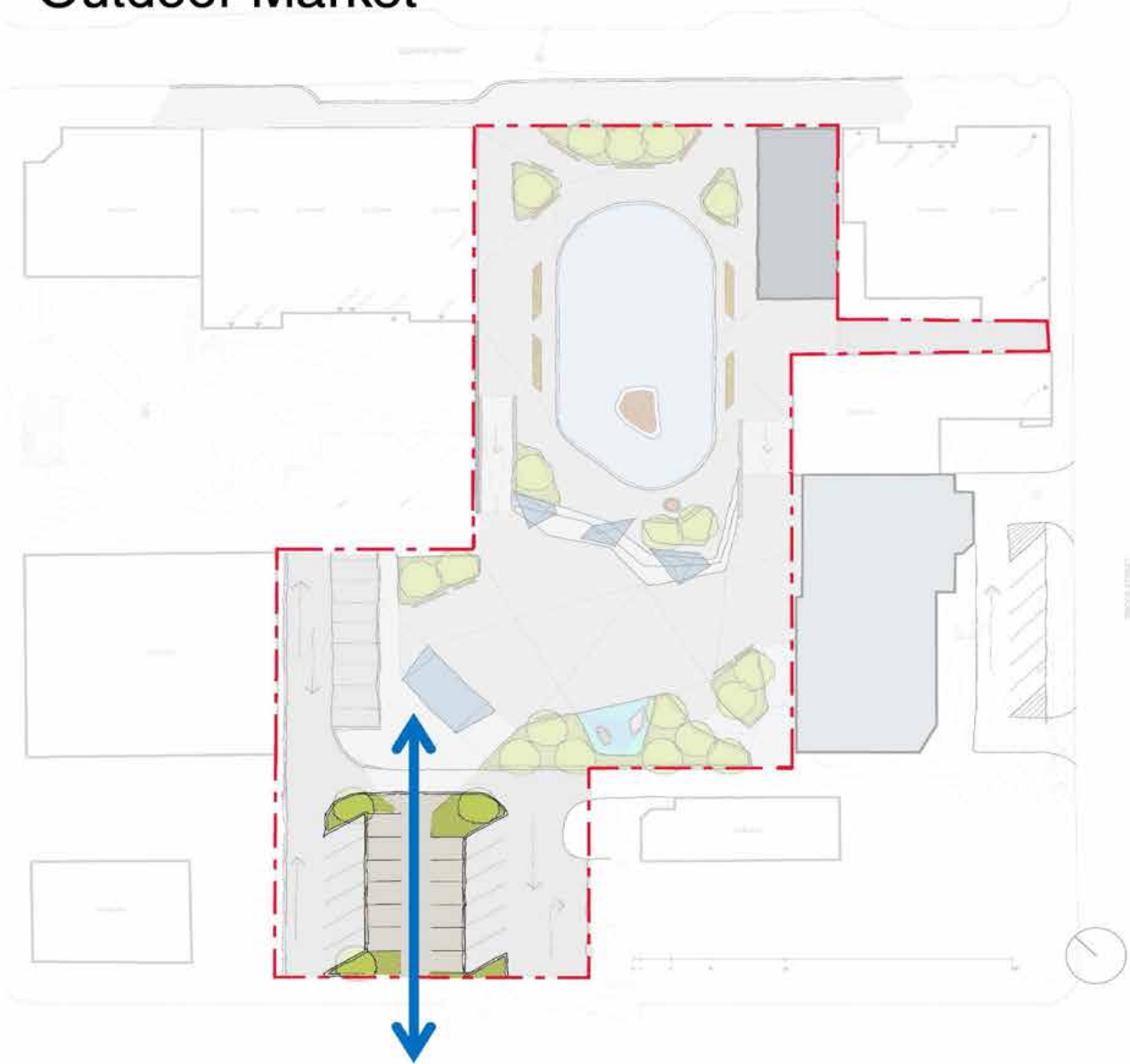
## Planting, Trees & Bioswales





The outdoor market space at the south end of the site does triple-duty. It is a safe pedestrian walkway into the site, a public parking area, and the potential new home for the outdoor Algoma Farmer's Market.

## Outdoor Market





Our lighting designers have developed a layered strategy to light the plaza.

2

# Lighting Design Concept

## Layer 1 : General Illumination

A detailed site plan of the SSM Downtown Civic Plaza. The plan shows various building footprints, parking areas, and landscaped zones. A yellow glow indicates the general ambient illumination provided by pole-mounted luminaires. The plan is oriented with Queen Street at the top and Bay Street at the bottom. A scale bar is located at the bottom right.

### General Illumination

#### Features

- General ambient illumination
- Pole mounted luminaires

A close-up photograph of a modern, white, pole-mounted luminaire fixture. It consists of two adjustable light heads mounted on a vertical pole.

A nighttime photograph of a tall, slender black pole with multiple light fixtures. The scene is set outdoors near a body of water, with city lights visible in the background under a clear blue sky.

### Illumination provided by building façade lighting

### Integrated Lighting Elements

#### Features

- Accent lighting at key moments
- Flexible encapsulated tape light at benches
- Step lights at ramps

A photograph of a curved, illuminated architectural feature, likely a ramp or bench, featuring warm-toned LED strip lighting integrated into its design.

A photograph of a rectangular, illuminated architectural feature, possibly a wall or ceiling panel, featuring warm-toned LED strip lighting integrated into its design.

## Layers of Light

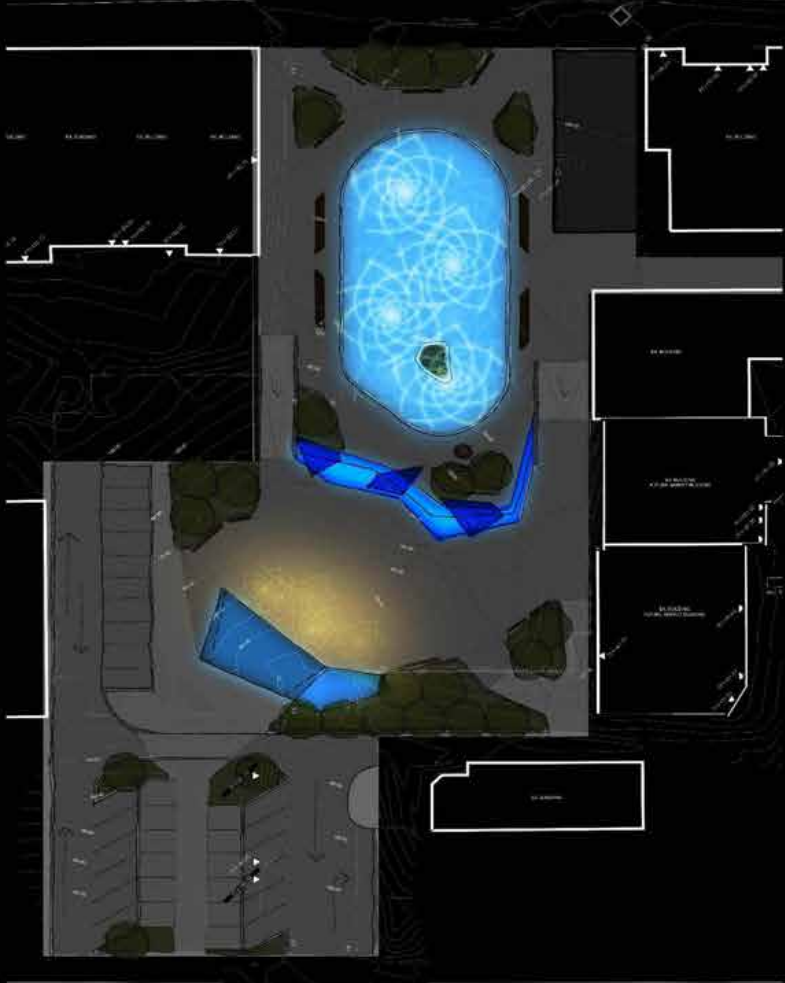
SSM DOWNTOWN CIVIC PLAZA – 100% SCHEMATIC DESIGN

MBL

The second layer of lighting is Audience Engagement, and consists of two elements.

Theatrical lighting will illuminate the skating rink and stage area. Textures and colour will create a majestic setting on the ice surface on long winter evenings.

### Layer 2 : Audience Engagement




## Lighting Design Concept

Public Engagement Lighting

Features


- Theatrical Lighting to illuminate key areas
- Flexibility in Aiming
- Ability to Apply Different Lens Effects



Interactive Lighting

Features

- Interactive lighting element at shade structures
- Multiple layers of interactivity:
- Stair + Structure
- Emulates water flow + rushing water
- Motion Interactivity



### Layers of Light

SSM DOWNTOWN CIVIC PLAZA— 100% SCHEMATIC DESIGN

MBL

57

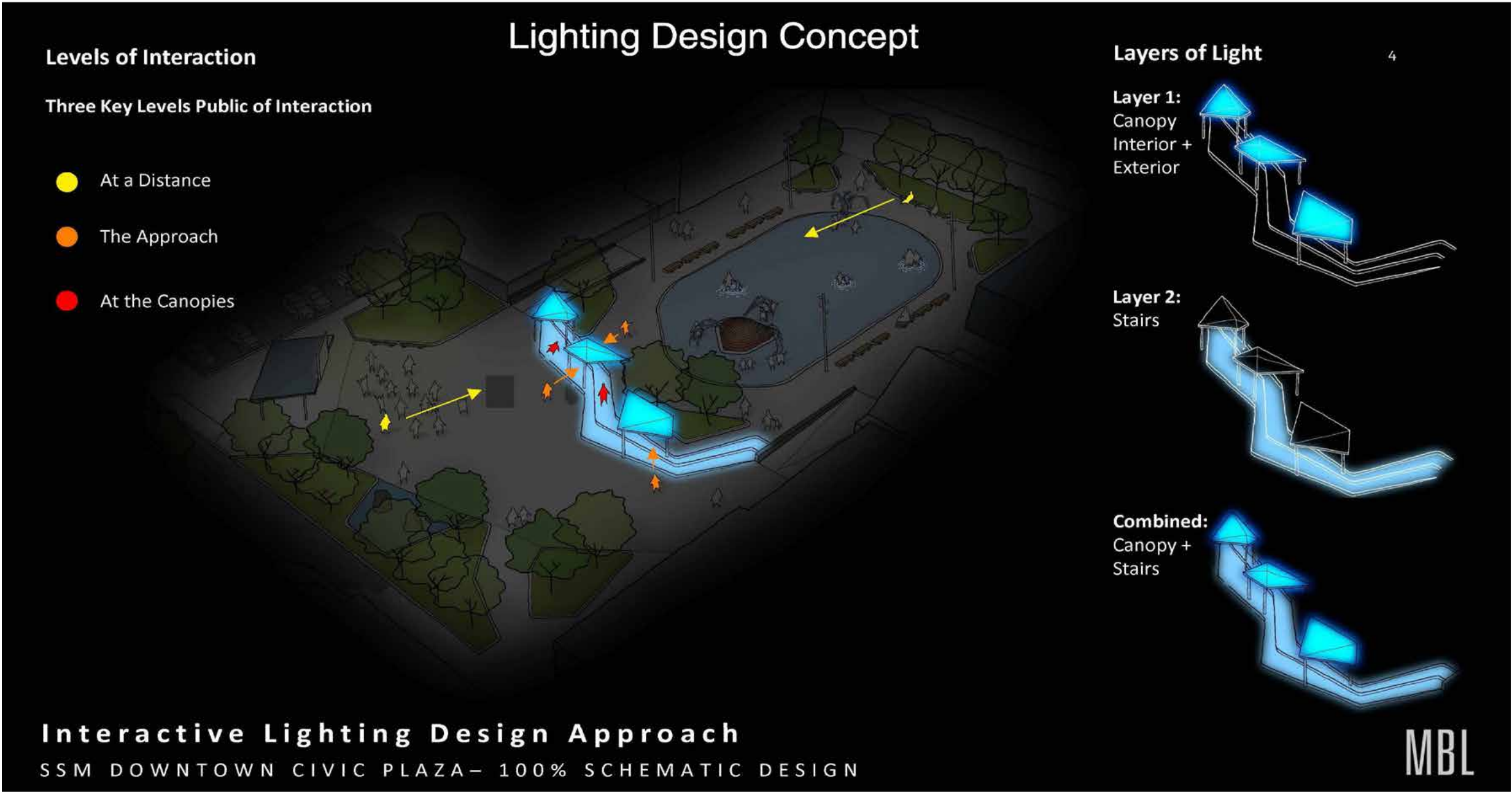
Sault Ste. Marie  
Downtown Civic Plaza - Concept Design Presentation  
September 29, 2020

BrookMcIlroy/



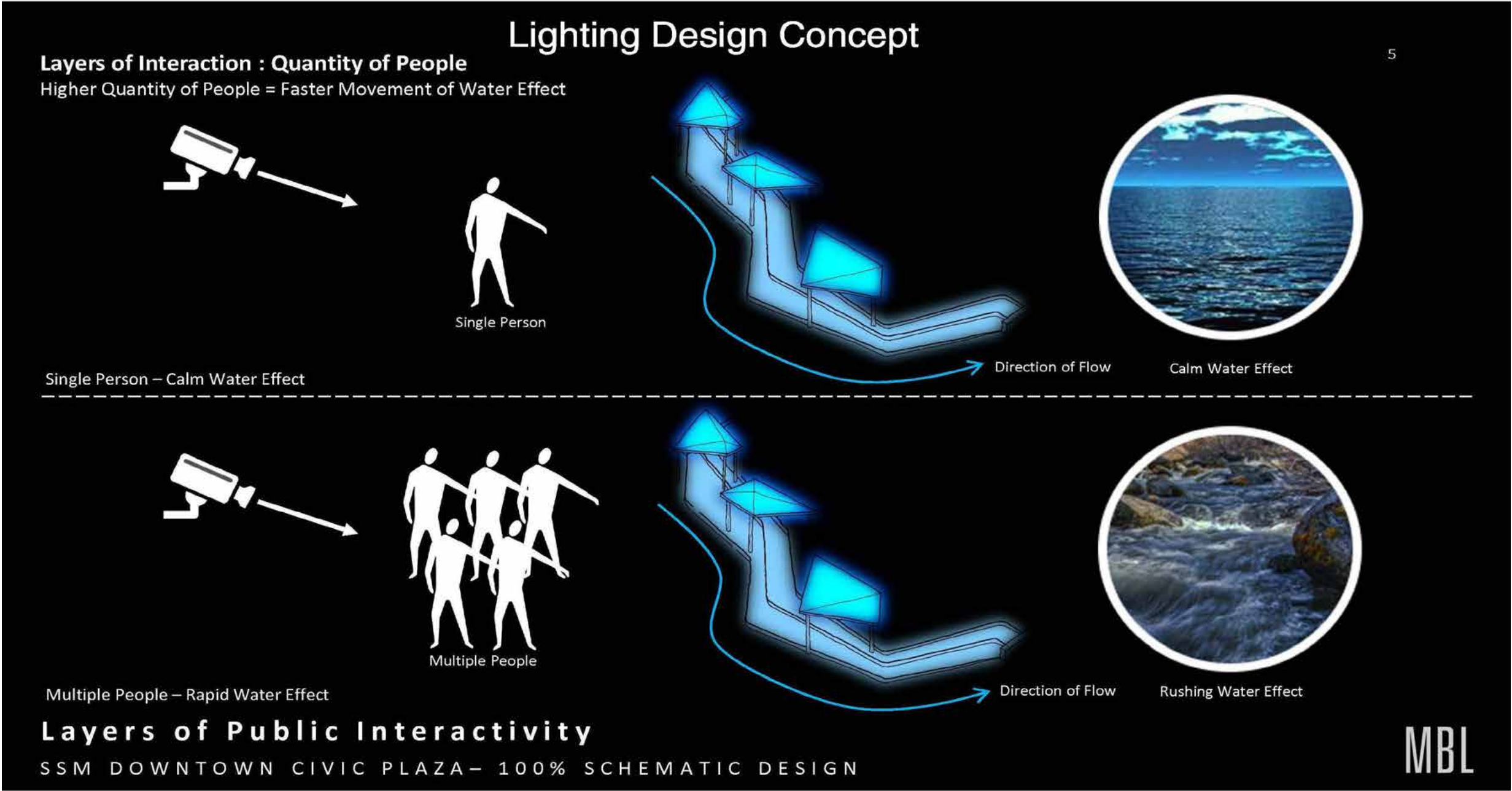
An Interactive lighting layer on the shade structures and amphitheater steps will change based on how the plaza is used.

As people move close to the area, sensors will detect this proximity and alter the lighting effects.



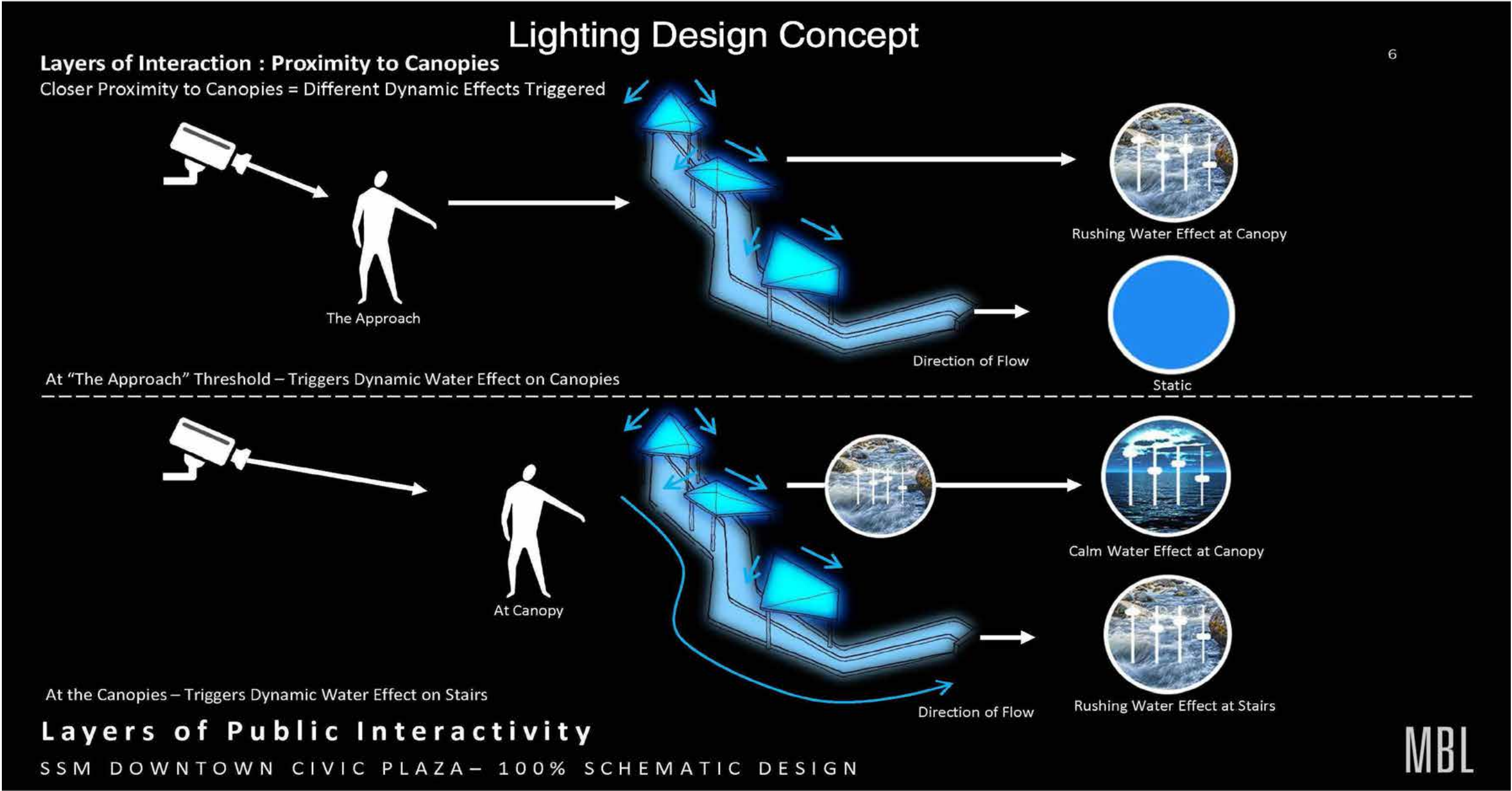
When people are far away from the area, a clam water effect will gently light the steps.

As people approach the steps, the lighting effect will intensify to look like the rushing water over the St. Mary's River rapids.





There are many variations of how this interactive lighting can work.



We will design the exact triggers and effects as the project progresses.

# Lighting Design Concept

7

**Layers of Interaction : Duration of Interaction**  
Duration of Interaction With Canopies = Triggers Different Effects

Quick Motion

Longer Stay

Direction of Flow

Calm Water Effect

Direction of Flow

Rushing Water Effect

Quick Walk Through Triggers Quick Wave Motion

Longer Duration Visit Triggers Sparkle Effect

**Layers of Public Interactivity**  
SSM DOWNTOWN CIVIC PLAZA – 100% SCHEMATIC DESIGN

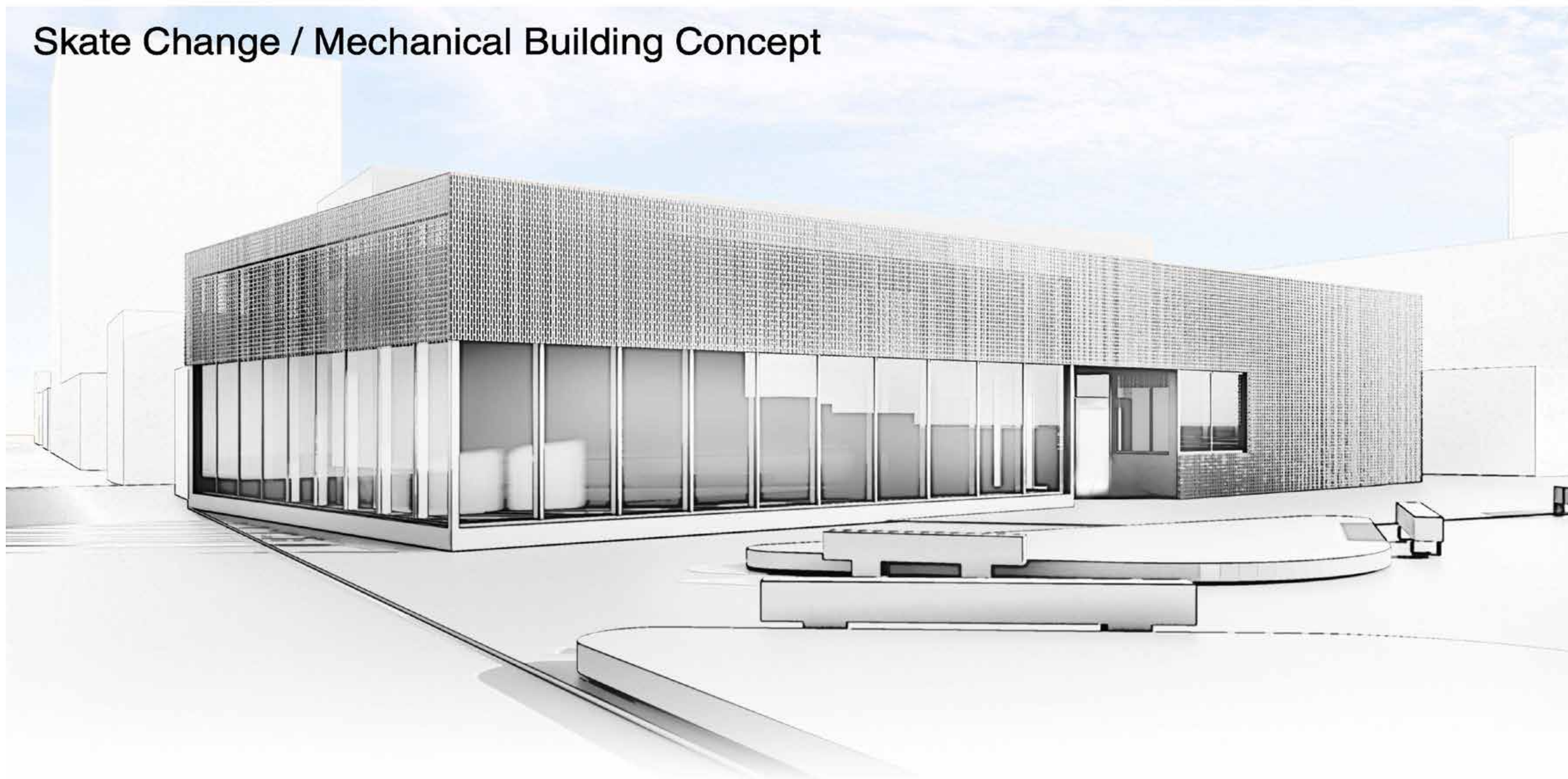
MBL



The skate change and mechanical building, located on Queen Street, is a functional but beautiful building. The façade treatment – still in development - will take its inspiration from the rapids theme.

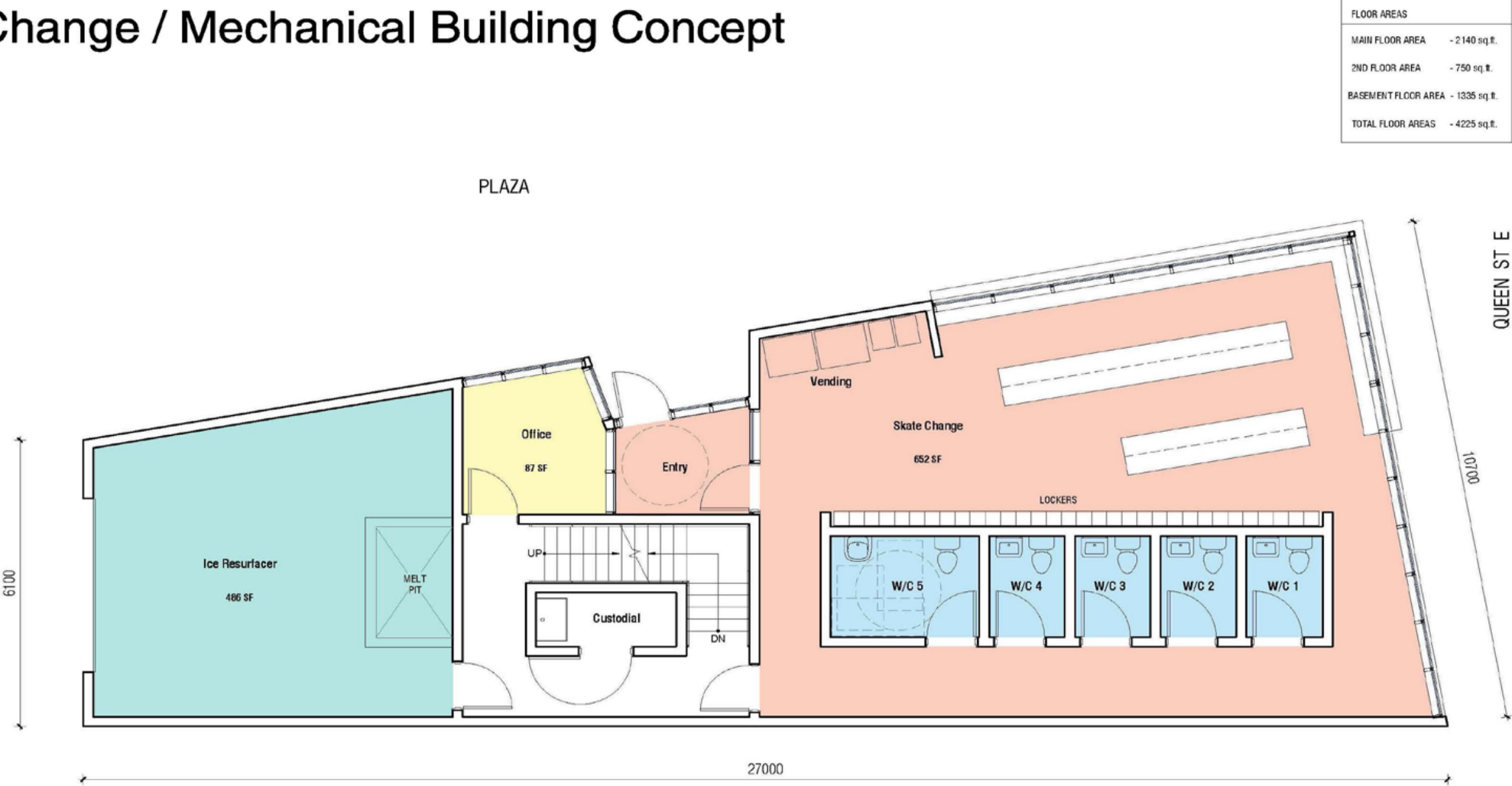
Clear glazing on the Queen Street façade allows the passersby to see into the skate change area, drawing attention from the street.

## Skate Change / Mechanical Building Concept



The building has 5 public washrooms; a skate change area; a staff office; mechanical equipment and a zamboni garage.

## Skate Change / Mechanical Building Concept



BrookMcIlroy/

SSM DOWNTOWN CIVIC PLAZA - SERVICE BUILDING  
Queen Street South, Sault Ste. Marie, ON, P6A 2A3  
Brook McIlroy

Schematic Plan - Main Floor  
1 : 75  
2020-09-16

SD-1



This downtown plaza will be transformational for the City.

It will be a place for activity and celebration and will become the go-to outdoor destination once complete.

Thank you.

Thank you

